

AN
APPEAL
TO
THE PUBLIC,
ON THE SUBJECT OF
The Riots in Birmingham.

Price Three Shillings and Sixpence.

AN
APPEAL

TO

THE PUBLIC



The Royal

Price Three Shillings and Sixpence

AN
APPEAL

TO
THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

The Riots in Birmingham.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
STRICTURES ON A PAMPHLET,
INTITLED

'Thoughts on the late Riot at Birmingham.'

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

QUIS NOVUS ISTE FUROR; QUO NUNC, QUO TENDITIS?
VIRGIL.

THE SECOND EDITION.

BIRMINGHAM,

Printed by J. Thompson;

SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

MDCCXCII.

AN
APPEAL

TO
THE PUBLIC

ON THE SUBJECT OF
The Riots in Birmingham.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED
REMARKS ON A LAMEN-
TARY STATE OF THE



BY JOSEPH THOMSON, ESQ., F.R.S.

THE SECOND EDITION.

BIRMINGHAM:
Printed by J. Thompson,
Sole Agent, 15, MARK LANE, LONDON.
MIDDESEX.

24 - 7 -

THE DEDICATION.

To the People of England.

MY COUNTRYMEN,

I PRESENT myself before you in a situation that ought to engage your attention, because, in fact, it no less concerns yourselves than me. It has hitherto been your great boast, that you were possessed of the best form of government in the world; that in England all men are subject to the laws, from the king upon the throne to the meanest person in the realm; that no man can be long confined, much less punished, without the

sentence of law; that whenever any man is accused of a crime, opportunity is given him to make his defence, in the presence of his accusers and of the witnesses against him; and that in all cases he must be tried by his peers, by persons in a situation in all respects similar to his own, so that they themselves may expect the same treatment in the same circumstances. Without this you are sensible there can be no equal law, or equal liberty. It has also been the great pride of Englishmen, that with us the press is free; so that any opinion whatever, civil or religious, may be openly proposed, and discussed, without any apprehension of danger.

A jealousy with respect to *law* has ever distinguished Englishmen, so that you have been content to suffer the greatest pests of society to escape punishment,

punishment, rather than the law should be violated in their persons ; reasoning justly, that it is better that one man, though ever so criminal, should escape punishment, than that a precedent should be established, in consequence of which thousands of innocent persons might be exposed to suffering ; and this might be the case if any arbitrary mode of proceeding should be encouraged in courts of justice. Should a person actually condemned to die for the greatest crime, be put to death otherwise than by the sentence of a judge, and by the direction of the sheriff, it would be deemed *murder* ; so sacred do you justly esteem the regular execution of the laws, not bearing that any punishment should be inflicted but such as the law directs, and in the precise manner directed by it. Need I then to say what you ought to think of the mode of proceeding

against me and my friends at Birmingham, when all that I am charged with is the freedom of my writings?

I was born an Englishmen as well as any of you. Though labouring under civil disabilities, as a Dissenter, I have long contributed my share to the support of government, and supposed I had the protection of its constitution and laws for my inheritance. But I have found myself greatly deceived; and so may any of you, if, like me, you should, with or without cause, be so unfortunate as to incur popular odium. For then, as you have seen in my case, without any form of trial whatever, without any intimation of your crime, or of your danger, your houses and all your property may be destroyed, and you may not have the good fortune to escape with life, as I have done. Other innocent

nocent persons also may be involved in the same calamities with yourselves. What are the old French *Lettres de Cachet*, or the horrors of the late demolished *Bastile*, compared to this? Make then my case, what it soon may be, your own, and you will not rate the advantages of the British government so high as you have generally done. For in what part of the world could a peaceable citizen have had less protection of law, or enjoyed less *security*, which is the great end of all civil government?

If we offend against the law, let us be tried according to law, and suffer the penalty denounced by it. I do not flee my country, and am at all times amenable to the laws of it. But as you would not allow me to judge in my own case, and take my revenge upon any person whom I may conceive

conceive to have injured me, let not others wreak their vengeance upon me.

You will say that such outrages as these cannot be prevented under any government, that they are like hurricanes or earthquakes; so that to complain of them, is to complain of the order of nature and providence. But not to say that sufficient provision might easily be made to prevent any disorder of this kind, our complaint is that the injury is not universally resented. The Country does not yet sufficiently feel the disgrace that has been done to it, and great numbers rather exult in our sufferings, so that we are far from thinking ourselves secure from farther injuries. Many persons not only express no disapprobation of our sufferings, or of the illegal manner in which they were inflicted, but

but plainly enough threaten us with more outrages of the same kind*.

Before you, therefore, I accuse my townsmen, and many others, whom I have described, of the greatest injustice and cruelty; and not having had an opportunity *before* my punishment, I now *after* it, plead my cause, and explain my whole conduct in this *Appeal*. Rather, the laws themselves, the laws that have been violated in my case, complain that *they* have been infringed, and that a principle which leads to all confusion, and the disso-

* Among other circumstances which prove this, is the following extract from a printed paper, dated *Birmingham Constitutional Tavern*, Oct. 17, 1791, sent to me by the post from Birmingham. "But let them" (the Dissenters) "beware—The arm of Loyalty has been raised against them—Their present deportments is in proof that it was needful. The bolt, though shot, is not intirely spent, and the people at large have too much affection for their KING, and reverence for their present GOVERNMENT, to suffer either of them to be attacked with impunity, by the arms of the seditious. The lion is too magnanimous to trample upon the fallen—Misuse not then his noble nature, ye Dissenters—for if ye again arouse him—Your Commentator Mr. Keir may explain the consequences."

lution

lution of all government, has usurped their place. And no foreign enemy can be so dangerous to you as this within yourselves.

But we suffer, it is said, as Dissenters from the established religion. On this account, we have a double title to protection. A Dissenter is one of a minority, and the Unitarian Dissenters, with whom I class myself, are a small minority, though an increasing one. We therefore stand in greater need of the protection of law; and it is the more inexcusable to treat us ill, because you have nothing to fear from us. You are more obliged to Dissenters than to other members of the community, as, besides bearing the whole expence of our own religion, we contribute our share to the expence of yours. If we be not defective in any civil duty, why should we be exposed to

to any civil punishment? Leave our religion to our consciences, and to God, whom alone it concerns, and consider how you would wish to be treated if you lived in a country where any other religion than your own was professed. We are excluded, and we think unjustly, from civil employments and emoluments. If you think proper to continue this *negative* punishment, do not add *positive* ones, and least of all encourage such as are illegal, and which may introduce evils of an unknown nature and extent, which even your latest posterity may feel. For such has been the case of persecution in other countries, even when it was carried on in a much more unexceptionable manner than it has been at Birmingham.

As to the *French Revolution*, the defence and commemoration of which
has

has been imputed to myself and others as so great a crime, you will soon see it in a different light. The enormous expences of all modern European governments have opened the eyes of men to the nature and uses of government in general; and in consequence of this, the whole of the Gothic Feudal system, embracing matters both of a civil and ecclesiastical nature, is beginning to shake to its foundation. This will necessarily produce a convulsion that will be felt in every state in Europe. All nations must ultimately be benefited by it, though they may suffer by the temporary shock. But be assured that those countries will suffer the least in which great *revolutions* will be prevented by temperate and seasonable *reforms*. Then we, who have suffered by the fury of a misguided populace (who have committed their lawless devastations in the name of *the church and the King*)

King) shall be considered as the martyrs of your liberties; and in the firm belief of this we joyfully bear all their outrages.

As individuals we pretend not to deserve your notice; but our case is general, and we hope it will lead you to respect, if not us, at least the law, yourselves, and your posterity.

Though an advocate for reformation, I am a friend to the general principles of our constitution; and as a well-wisher to my country, and every description of men in it, I subscribe myself,

Your injured Countryman,

LONDON,
Nov. 1, 1791.

J. PRIESTLEY.

THE DEDICATION

Know, shall be considered as the
part of your liberality; and in the
belief of this we joyfully bear all their
outrages.

As individuals we pretend not to
believe your notice; but our case is
general, and we hope it will lead you
to respect it, not as at least the law,
yourself, and your posterity.

Though an advocate for reform-
tion, I am attached to the general
principles of our constitution; and as
a well-wisher to my country, and
every description of its
people myself.

Your injured Countryman,
J. PRIESTLEY.

THE PREFACE.

FEW persons who have addressed the Public have ever been in circumstances which made it so difficult to give satisfaction to their different readers as I now am in; owing to their different opinions and prepossessions with respect to the subject of this Appeal. Those who have already formed their opinion as to the facts, will conclude that every account which represents them as having been different from what they have conceived them to be, is certainly false, if not from design, yet from misapprehension. They who are agreed with respect to the *facts* will draw different *conclusions* from them; and even they who agree both with respect to the facts and the conclusions, will think very differently of the *temper* and *manner* in which they should be spoken of, especially by myself, who am so much a party concerned.

With respect to my enemies, do what I will, I shall be equally censured. With them all my facts will be falsehoods, the language of just indignation will be insolence, and that of christian meekness either meanness or hypocrisy. I shall therefore make myself perfectly easy as to what *they* may say of me. Where there is nothing to lose, there is nothing to fear.

My friends whose feelings are as different as their constitutions, will expect that, writing, as it were, in a common cause, I should express their precise sentiments and feelings. But this being evidently impossible, I can only exculpate them, by declaring that both the sentiments and the language of this work are solely my own, and such as arose from my feelings at the time of writing, which was presently after my arrival in London, while the scenes that I have described were fresh in my mind, with a very few alterations and additions occasioned by subsequent accounts.

I make no apology for the severity with which I have occasionally condemned the conduct of my adversaries. For what greater crimes

crimes can men commit with respect to society, than those which they either have committed, or intended, and in which they now exult. But this implies no malice, or ill-will towards them. I sincerely pray for them in the language of the liturgy, for which they pretend to have so nobly exerted themselves, that as " my enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, God would forgive them, and turn their hearts." As to the doctrine of christian meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of our enemies, it should be interpreted by our Saviour's own conduct. For it will not be said that *he* felt otherwise than he ought to have done with respect to *his* enemies; and certainly his language is invariably that of the strongest indignation and reproof. The same was that of Paul, and of all the apostles, towards those who, in their opinion, corrupted the gospel, and opposed their ministry.

A strong sense of the impropriety of men's sentiments and conduct naturally expresses itself in indignant language, though, when coming from a christian, it will always be accompanied with the most sincere compassion for the state and depravity into

which malignity of mind necessarily sinks men; and all that christianity can do, is earnestly to wish and pray, that our adversaries may be brought to a better state of mind, in order to their being entitled to our complacency, and forgiveness in the proper sense of the word.

With respect to the high church party in this country, may be considered as in a state of open war. I utterly dislike their principles and maxims, as they do mine; and I scruple not to take any fair opportunity of expressing this dislike in the most unequivocal language. Let them do the same with respect to my principles; but let us observe the rules of honourable war. If, however, they chuse to proceed as they have begun to do at Birmingham, I do not wish to follow their example. They will find in time that to conquer in that manner is no victory. To conciliate these persons I consider as a thing absolutely impossible, and therefore not worth attempting. Whatever tends most completely to my justification, will only irritate them the more; as was the case with my *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. They are *parties* against whom I plead; and those that I wish to conciliate are our common

mon judges, our countrymen in general, the world at large, and especially posterity.

Whatever has been my indignation against my enemies I have never forgotten, and I hope never shall forget, that their conduct forms a part of the plan of a wise and just providence; that they, as well as myself, have a proper place in the general system, the great scope of which is general and infinite good, of which they also, in due time, will partake; though I rejoice, and am truly thankful, that their place is not mine. On this occasion I shall take the liberty to quote what I wrote long ago in the *Dedication* of my *Treatise on Philosophical Necessity* to the late excellent Dr. Jebb.

“ You and I, Sir, rejoice in the belief,
“ that the whole human race are under the
“ same wholesome discipline, and that they
“ will all derive the most valuable advantages from it, though in different degrees,
“ in different ways, and at different periods;
“ that even the *persecutors* are only giving
“ the precedence to the *persecuted*, and advancing them to a much higher degree of
“ perfection and happiness; and that they
“ must themselves undergo a more severe
b 3 “ discipline

“ discipline than that which they are the
“ means of administering to others.

“ With this persuasion we cannot but
“ consider every *being* and every *thing* in
“ a favourable light. Every person with
“ whom we have any connexion is a friend,
“ and every event in life is a benefit, while
“ God is equally the father, and the friend,
“ of the whole creation.”

Feeling myself to be a publicly *injured*
person, I cannot abandon the sense of dig-
nity, peculiar to that character, or not
feel the superiority which it gives me over
my *injurers*, and which will necessarily
influence the language in which I speak
of them.

If I be asked whom I consider as my ene-
mies, as holding principles most opposite to
mine (which has been the true cause of their
animosity towards me) I answer without
hesitation, all those, of the clergy and laity,
who are the avowed advocates for every
thing continuing as it now is, in church
and state. Their genuine sentiments may
be seen in the late *Address of the Town of*
Birmingham to the King, in which they say
that

that "they will oppose with their lives and
"fortunes, every attempt at innovation."

Those who dislike this language, who are a great number, even among the clergy, I am far from considering in the light of adversaries. They are friends, engaged in the same cause, though occupying different posts. We equally wish that the world and every thing in it, should improve. We think there are things both in church and state that require reformation, and that in every country pretending to *freedom* there should be full liberty to point these out, and make them the subject of a free discussion.

From this love that we bear to our country, and even to our enemies in it, we think it our duty to point out whatever we think to be defective in its constitution; and we shall do it with the more freedom and energy, from considering the dreadful evils which have lately arisen from these defects at Birmingham. What was there worse than this that took place during the great revolution in France, which I and many others consider as having issued in a most glorious state of liberty and happiness? Whereas, all

that we yet see at Birmingham, is the mad triumph of bigotry, and such as was seldom exhibited even in ages of acknowledged barbarism.*

I trust, however, that though nothing but *evil* appears at present, much *good* will in due time arise from it, if not to this country, in which the spectacle is exhibited, yet to Europe, and the world at large. To every reflecting mind the riots in Birmingham, must set in a peculiarly strong light the baneful nature of bigotry, and the evils to which men are exposed in a country destitute of a good police. Even the laws of this country, whose great boast it has been that it is the only seat of *true liberty*,

* How different are the spectacles that are now exhibited in France and in England. Here bigotry has been fostered, and has acquired new strength. There it is almost extinct. Here the friends of the establishment are burning the meeting-houses of the Dissenters, with all the rage of Crusaders; while in Paris one of the churches has been procured by the Protestants. It was opened by one of their ministers to a crowded audience, among whom were many Catholics, all in tears of joy for the happy change. The preacher's text was, *The night is far spent, the day is at hand.* Here we must rather preach from Isaiah lx. 2. *Behold darkness shall cover the land, and gross darkness the people.*

are

are in a great degree intolerant; but the spirit of the people, if not that of the government, appears to be much more so, and the world will soon see to what this leads.

If it be to *good*, it will be a new thing in this old world of ours, viz. that persecution, and that by a mob, legislating, judging, and punishing, in the instant, is favourable to truth, and consequently to virtue and happiness. But, if which is most to be apprehended, this business, which certainly was evil in itself, should lead to farther evil, it will be another, and I wish it may be the last, instance of the baneful effects of intolerance, and will also show in a striking light the evils that arise from a civil establishment of christianity. If this be the case, and the world should take warning by it, I shall not think our sufferings, great as they have been, a subject of lamentation; considering myself, and my fellow-sufferers, as the instructors, and benefactors of mankind.

Some parts of this Appeal, I am well aware, will expose me to the charge of *vanity*, especially the *addresses* which I have thought proper to subjoin to it. But they
were

were in a great measure necessary to the narrative part of the work, particularly those of my late congregation, and that of Leeds, as they will shew that, notwithstanding my other pursuits, I did not, in their opinion, neglect the proper duties of my profession. The address from the Academy of Sciences at Paris, will show in what light the riots at Birmingham are considered by scientific persons in a neighbouring and highly enlightened country; and that from Great Yarmouth, how they are thought of by Dissenters of different denominations at home.* I may likewise add in my justification, that persecution and calumny more than once extorted self praise from an apostle.

* As some persons may wish to see an account of all the addresses I have hitherto received to this time, Nov. 1, 1791, I shall briefly mention them with their dates.

From the Accademy of Sciences at Paris, July 30, 1791.

From the Friends of the Constitution at Lyons, August 6.

From the Friends of the Constitution at Nantes, August 9.

From the Friends of the Constitution at Marmande on the Garonne, August 26.

From the Friends of the Constitution at the Jacobins Rue St. Honoré, Paris, August 16.

From the Friends of the Constitution at Clermont, August 20.

From the Friends of the Constitution at Toulouse, September 21.

From

It will, however, be a gratification to my adversaries to be informed, that, except

From the Ministers and Members of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Great Yarmouth, July 29.

From the Ministers and Members of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Maidstone, August 8.

From the Society of the Old Meeting in Birmingham, August 21.

From the Protestant Dissenters of Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, August 24.

From the Committee of Protestant Dissenting Laymen and Ministers of the three denominations in the West Riding of the county of York, September 1, at their quarterly meeting.

From the Protestant Dissenting ministers of the three denominations at Llechryd, South Wales, August 25.

From the Philosophical Society at Derby, September 3.

From the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Exeter, September 7, at their half yearly meeting.

From the Revolution Society at Norwich, September 8.

From the Constitutional Society at Manchester, September 13.

From the Students at the New College, Hackney, September 21.

From the Protestant Dissenters belonging to several congregations in the Southern and Western parts of the county of Somerset, at their annual meeting, September 28.

From several Protestant Dissenting Ministers in the neighbourhood of Bolton, Lancashire.

From the Protestant Dissenters of the cities of Bristol and Bath.

From the Revolution Society at London.

in

in one instance, viz. the address from the Philosophical Society at Derby, I have received no address from any set of persons in this country who have not professedly separated themselves from the rest on the principle of civil and religious liberty. Indeed, I fear there may be even literary societies in England, and much more the inhabitants of whole towns, who, if they formed any resolutions on the subject, would make them more favourable to the rioters, than to the sufferers at Birmingham; so general, in my present opinion, is the spirit favourable to church establishments, and those high maxims of government, by which the instigators of the riots at Birmingham were actuated. How long this will continue to be the case, I do not say.

Gratitude requires that I should say I have had very flattering prospects held out to me if I would remove to France, where both the laws and the spirit of the people, would be much more favourable to me. But there I should be in a manner useless; and as, according to the course of nature, I have yet some years of activity left, and I can employ them to the most advantage in this country, I think it my duty to spend them

them in it. As to my personal safety, I may surely hope that the horrid scenes at Birmingham, which will long make it a *proverb and a bye word* in Europe, will not be repeated any where else. Or if they be, my life will always be at the disposal of him that gave it.

If I were disposed to boast, it will be, like Paul, of my sufferings; and though his list, no doubt, far exceeds mine, yet in one respect I think I need not yield to him, or to any man whatever. I mean with respect to *calumny*, which can hardly go deeper, or extend farther, than it has done with me. To say nothing of old calumnies, which are, however, now circulated with as much confidence as ever, such as my having declared that I would never rest till I had pulled down that impostor Jesus Christ; that I made a convert of Silas Deane to atheism, &c. &c. &c. thousands have been made to believe that I am not only a speculative republican, and an enemy to our present government by king, lords, and commons, but an advocate for absolute anarchy or government by mobs, without any rule of proceeding whatever; that by mere mobs I seriously intended to subvert the constitution

tution in church and state, and that Mr. Russell and myself had armed men in readiness to act under our orders for this purpose, so that there could not be a more dangerous subject in any state.*

* In a Song entitled *Old Mother Church*, describing the Dissenters, are the two following stanzas.

Sedition is their Creed,
Feign'd sheep, but wolves indeed,
How can we trust?
Gunpowder Priestley would,
Deluge the throne with blood,
And lay the great and good,
Low in the Dust.

Hift'ry thy page unfold,
Did not their fires of old,
Murder their king?
And they would overthrow,
King, lords, and bishops too,
And while they gave the blow,
Loyally sing;

O Lord our God arise,
Scatter our enemies
And make them fall.

&c. &c. &c.

The following paragraph from p. 42, of an *Address to Unitarians*, by T. G. Hancock is so curious, that I shall subjoin it to this note.

"Dr. Priestley at present seems a chaos in miniature. not worth God's notice, has neither belief nor understanding

With respect to the subject of this Appeal, the populace of Birmingham were made to believe that I not only dined at the Hotel on the fourteenth of July last, but declared that if no other person whatever would join me, I would dine there alone. At that dinner it was confidently said, that I gave the toasts *No church, no king*, and *The king's head in a charger*. It was even asserted that I had conveyed gunpowder into one of the churches, and had contrived that it should explode during divine service, and some pious ladies, I am well informed, actually forbore going to church under the apprehension of it. This report was strengthened by another, viz. that two barrels of gunpowder were certainly found in my house.

It has been advanced with equal confidence, and as little regard to truth, that no party spirit existed in Birmingham till my preaching and writing introduced it. It

standing given him. For a careful analysis proves his spirit of the order of rebelling angels, his principles frothy and fiery, like fixed and inflammable air, mixed with gunpowder, his body a *terra damnata*, and the whole compound a *devil incarnate*. I hope Dissenters will be aware of his seduction, and take heed lest they are deceived through philosophy."

was

was no wonder, they also said, that I should discover this turbulence here, when I had shown the same spirit at Leeds, and had been driven from that, and every other place where I had lived, in the same manner as I had been from this. It was even said that my own congregation declared that I had misled them, and hoped that I should never be permitted to return.

Nothing now remains but to charge me with a robbery or house breaking; and then, on such evidence as that on which the preceding and many equally false allegations gained credit, I may, by such a *Warwickshire jury* as the last, be legally convicted and executed; the principal people of Birmingham not interposing to procure me a pardon. If I be so formidable an enemy to the church and the state as I have been represented, let those who call themselves the friends of the church and the king invent their lies, and forge their letters for *this* purpose, not merely for the burning of my house, my library, and laboratory. This was like shaving the lion's beard, which will grow again, when with the same razor, and with much less trouble, they might have cut his throat.

Let

Let them, however, remember, if they believe any thing of the matter (for the most zealous friends of church establishments, and the most unrelenting persecutors of conscientious men, are not always real believers in christianity) that there is an *hereafter*, and other juries than the late ones of Worcestershire or Warwickshire, before whom they must soon appear. To this judgment I appeal, and before it I cite my accusers.

The reason why I have added *Strictures on the Phamphlet intituled THOUGHTS ON THE LATE RIOTS AT BIRMINGHAM*, which was published after the greater part of this Appeal was printed, was that, whether it came from any authority, as some have supposed, or not, it speaks the genuine language of the high church party on the subject, such as has appeared in a less concentrated state in numberless paragraphs in the public newspapers; and without such authentic evidence, what has been said of the low prejudice, the malignant spirit, and absurd reasoning of that party, would hardly be credible, especially to my readers abroad. In any other view, this work would have been unworthy of any notice.

N.B. The Narrative part of this Appeal is in a manner confined to what I was witness to myself, and therefore chiefly relates to myself. For an account of the sufferings of others, I refer my readers to *An authentic Account of the Riots in Birmingham*, printed by Mr. Belcher. And here I would observe, that if, to the losses that may be claimed in a court of justice, be added those that were necessarily occasioned by the riots, to many persons who were driven from their houses, obliged to remove their goods, and purchase protection, &c. &c. the sum would be enormous. If the loss of *peace of mind* could be estimated by money, to what would it not amount? What then have not the pretended friends of the church and the king at Birmingham to answer for?

THE first article of the *Reflections* is copied from the Preface to the *Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, which was the first of my publications after the riots. That work will not fall into many hands, and if ever it be reprinted, that part of the Preface will be omitted.

7 DE 61

CONTENTS.

[LXXXIX]

SECTION IV.

THE

SECTION VII.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
<i>NARRATIVE</i> - - - - -	2

.....	
<i>Reflections</i> - - - - -	45

SECTION I.

<i>Of the Power of Resentment to prevent Com- passion</i> - - - - -	ib.
---	-----

SECTION II.

<i>My coming to Birmingham not the Cause of the Party Spirit in the Place</i> - - - - -	50
---	----

SECTION III.

<i>Of Dissenters meddling with Politics</i> - - -	52
---	----

SECTION IV.

<i>The Bigotry of the High Church Party the true Cause of the Riots</i> - - - - -	59
---	----

SECTION V.

<i>Of the Pretence that Government was adverse to the Dissenters and favoured the Rioters</i> -	68
---	----

SECTION VI.

Of the principal Use of an established Religion 76

SECTION VII.

*Of the Importance of a good Police in a well
constituted State* - - - - - 82

SECTION VIII.

*The Impolicy of checking the natural Expression
of Men's Sentiments* - - - - - 90

SECTION IX.

*Considerations relating to Persecution, and the
Consequences of it* - - - - - 95

SECTION X.

*The Conclusion, containing Reflections on the
Power of Religion in general* - - - 109

.....
*Strictures on a Pamphlet intitl'd 'Thoughts on
the late Riot at Birmingham'* - - - 117

APPENDIX.

*Copy of a Hand-bill privately circulated in
Birmingham, a few Days before the Riots* 129

My Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham 130

An Account of the Origin of the Riots in Birmingham, from a Newspaper called THE TIMES - - - - - 133

An Account of the Riots, written by a Member of the Establishment to a Friend of his near, Maidstone, in Kent - - - - - 135

Mr. Russell's Letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle - - - - - 138

Mr. Keir's Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham and Stafford Chronicle - - - 142

Copy of a Letter to me, printed in a Column opposite to my own Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, and thrown into many Houses in London, with the Title of SELF-MURDER, OR THE DOCTOR TRIED AND CONVICTED BY HIS OWN EVIDENCE 145

Copy of a Hand-bill distributed in London the Day after I arrived there - - - - - 147

Copies of two Hand-bills distributed among the Rioters - - - - - 148

The Address of the High-Bailiff, Clergy, &c. to the King - - - - - 150

The Address of the Dissenters to the King - ib.

An

<i>An Advertisement from the Committee of Dis-</i> <i>senters in Birmingham</i>	- - - - -	152
<i>Copy of a Letter addressed to the Bishops, and</i> <i>Members of the House of Commons</i>	-	153
<i>Copy of a Letter from M. Condorcet, Secretary</i> <i>to the Academy of Sciences at Paris</i>	-	154
<i>The Answer</i>	- - - - -	156
<i>An Address from the Philosophical Society at</i> <i>Derby</i>	- - - - -	157
<i>The Answer</i>	- - - - -	158
<i>From the Congregation of Mill-Hill Chapel,</i> <i>Leeds</i>	- - - - -	159
<i>From the Protestant Dissenters in Great Tar-</i> <i>mouth</i>	- - - - -	161
<i>From the Unitarian Society for promoting</i> <i>Christian Knowledge, and the Practice of</i> <i>Virtue</i>	- - - - -	162
<i>The Answer</i>	- - - - -	163
<i>An Address from the Members of the New</i> <i>Meeting Congregation</i>	- - - - -	166
<i>The Answer</i>	- - - - -	168

From

From the Young People belonging to the Con-
gregation of the New Meeting - - - 169

The Answer - - - 171

A second Address from the Members of the
New Meeting Congregation - - - 173

From the Young People belonging to the Con-
gregation of the New Meeting - - - 175

A third Address from the Members of the
New Meeting Congregation - - - 178

The Answer - - - 180

A fourth Address from the Members of the
New Meeting Congregation - - - 182

The Answer - - - 183

From the Young People belonging to the Con-
gregation of the New Meeting - - - 169
The Appendix - - - 171

A Fourth Address from the Members of the
New Meeting Congregation - - - 173
From the Young People belonging to the Con-
gregation of the New Meeting - - - 175

A Fifth Address from the Members of the
New Meeting Congregation - - - 178
The Appendix - - - 180

A Sixth Address from the Members of the
New Meeting Congregation - - - 182
The Appendix - - - 183

AN APPEAL

TO

THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

THE LATE RIOTS IN BIRMINGHAM.

THERE is no transaction, especially one of a public nature, that will not be viewed by persons of different dispositions, or placed in different situations, in different lights; and least of all can the diligent inquirer expect an impartial account from the persons immediately concerned in it. All that he can do must be to compare every account that he can collect, and then form his own judgment. In some respects one party, and in others another, will be the best qualified to give him just information, and among the rest, in all cases of great calamity, he would certainly wish to hear the sufferers themselves, and not wholly depend on the accounts of those who either inflicted

B

the

the sufferings, or who rejoiced in them. I hope, therefore, it will not be thought improper in me, who am a principal sufferer by the late riots in Birmingham, to give *my* account of them, and my ideas of their causes and probable consequences. I shall endeavour to be as candid and impartial as I can, and the intelligent reader will easily perceive whether I be so, or not. I shall divide the work into two parts, *Narrative*, and *Reflections*.

.....

NARRATIVE.

I became an inhabitant of Birmingham in the year 1780, without any other view than as a proper situation for attending to my philosophical pursuits, in which, having no original fortune of my own, I was assisted by a few liberal friends of science, who were pleased to think favourably of me in that respect. It was a plan suggested by the late Dr. Fothergill, and cheerfully adopted by Sir George Saville, Sir Stephen Theodore Janssen, Mr. Constable of Burton Constable, and Dr. Price, all of them, it is something remarkable, of different religious persuasions, but equally lovers of experimental philosophy and disinterested promoters of it. Before, and since their deaths, the scheme was patronized by many other generous friends of science, whose names, as they are still living, I forbear to mention. None of them, I believe, have seen any reason to be dissatisfied with my conduct, as their operator.

In

In two administrations proposals were made to assist me by a *pension*. It was alleged that, since my studies had been highly useful to the public, and very expensive to myself, there was much more reason why I should receive this assistance than almost any other person who ever had obtained it. But in both the cases I declined the overture, chusing rather to be obliged to generous individuals, notwithstanding some unpleasant circumstances occasionally attending this situation, than add to the burdens of my country.

My original and favourite profession, however, was that of a christian minister, in my opinion, the most important, useful, and honourable of all others; for which, though discontinued six years while I was tutor in the academy at Warrington, and seven years while I was with the Marquis of Lansdown, I always had the strongest predilection, and in which I never failed to officiate occasionally, when I was out of the employment. But having been led, in the course of my theological studies, which I never discontinued, to adopt opinions materially different from those of the generality of Dissenters, and in which I could not expect that any considerable society of them would soon concur with me, I had no thought of ever being employed except as an occasional preacher, in assisting those of my friends whose congregations might not dislike my services.

It was, therefore, with equal surprize and pleasure that, on Mr. Hawkes's resignation of his office

of minister at the New Meeting in Birmingham, I had an almost unanimous invitation to succeed him. This, however, I accepted on the express condition of the congregation having no claim upon me except on Sundays; the rest of the week being devoted to my philosophical and other pursuits. The other duties of the place were discharged by my worthy colleague Mr. Blythe. To my philosophical pursuits I gave constant attention, of which the public have seen the effects, and as a minister I did nothing more than attend to what appeared to me to be the faithful discharge of my duty, and I have reason to think to the satisfaction of my congregation.

Having, in every former situation, been upon terms of intimacy with some or other of the clergy of the church of England, men of liberal minds, and lovers of science, I should have been happy to have found those at Birmingham with whom I could have formed a similar connexion. But the spirit of party, I saw with regret, ran higher there than in most other places in the kingdom.

Such was the bigotry of the clergy of Birmingham, that long before I went thither, as well as during the whole time of my residing there, they refused to go into the same coach with the dissenting ministers at funerals, or to walk with them in the procession. We had hoped that they had become ashamed of this absurd instance of clerical pride, which I had never heard of before, and
hoping

hoping better things of Mr. Curtis, who was of a dissenting family, Mr. Scholefield, the minister of the Old Meeting, being invited to a funeral at which he officiated, sent to know whether he might be permitted to walk along with him. The answer was a civil but a peremptory refusal, and the proposal was never repeated. When I gave the late Bishop of St Asaph an account of this behaviour of the clergy of Birmingham, which was long before my controversy with Mr. Madan, he expressed much concern at it, and said that he thought such bigotry had now existed no where.

That I was not eager to engage in any controversy with the clergy of the town, was evident from my making no reply whatever to two of their publications respecting me, before the appearance of Mr. Madan's Sermon. One had the signature of LUTHER, and the other that of M. S. The real names of the writers were well known; but I did not so much as read either of them. The latter I slightly looked into at a bookseller's shop; and perceiving that it contained much general and virulent invective, I paid no farther attention to it. In order to invite purchasers, the profits of this publication were advertised to go to the use of the General Infirmary. It was re-advertised during my controversy with Mr. Madan. The same clergyman was supposed to be the author of one of the tracts in that controversy, and of a virulent reply to my late *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. But these also were unnoticed by me.

The spirit of the high church party was conspicuous on the establishment of Sunday schools in Birmingham; and this also was previous to my controversy with Mr. Madan. At first persons of all religious persuasions acted on this occasion in concert, of which an example had been set us in London; and at a meeting of all the subscribers, convened for the purpose, it was agreed that the children should go to whatever places of public worship their parents should chuse. As there were no children of Dissenters who wanted that instruction, all the Sunday scholars, without exception, went to the established church, and no complaint was ever made of this by any Dissenter. But the high church party, not being content with this, at a meeting of the subscribers, the business of which was not advertised, the former rule was rescinded, and the children were then absolutely ordered to do what they ever had done, and always might have done, that is, attend the worship of the established church, *and no other.*

The Dissenters waited more than a year, to see whether the high church party would revert to their former more liberal maxims, and continued their subscriptions. But having waited so long to no purpose, they opened their own separate Sunday schools, with advantages, I will venture to say, far superior to those of the establishment, but with liberty to every parent to order his child to attend whatever place of public worship he pleased. Still, however, several of the Dissenters continued their
subscriptions

subscriptions to the former Sunday schools, as well as to their own.

At a charity school long established in Birmingham, not only are all the children obliged to attend the worship of the church of England, but even the contributions of Dissenters towards the support of it have been refused; whereas in another charity school instituted by the Dissenters, any person recommending a child, has the privilege of ordering him to attend whatever place of public worship he himself chuses.

Such was the well known bigotry of the town in general, that when Mr. Newling, a person of the most respectable character (who preceded Mr. Madan in the rectory of St. Philip's) came from Shrewsbury to Birmingham, though he had been, and continued to be, upon the best terms with the dissenting ministers in the former situation, he found he could have no intercourse with them in the latter; and yet I will venture to say there were not in all England three more respectable, or more peaceable dissenting ministers, and men who had less troubled the church of England in any way whatever, than those who served the two congregations of the Old and New Meetings at that time. Mr. Curtis himself, the Rector of St. Martin's, on his first coming to Birmingham, had the liberality to come and hear me preach a fast sermon at the Old Meeting, and brought his curate along with him. He even expressed himself much pleased

with the service. But afterwards, I suppose, he perceived the true spirit of the place, and the necessity of conforming to it.

For a true representation of these facts I appeal to the town at large. With what truth, then, can it be said, as is now confidently done, that my coming to Birmingham, and my conduct there, was the sole cause of the animosity between the church people and the Dissenters of that place?*

Wishing to discover the cause of this excessive party spirit, and to apply, if I should be able, some remedy to it, I found the Dissenters were in possession of all the civil power in the place, by having the nomination to all the offices; and though they constantly gave the principal office,

* A Letter lately addressed to me and Mr. Russell has these words; "It is notorious that the town of Birmingham had enjoyed an interrupted scene of peace and happiness for more than fifty years. Every thing in it moved in perfect order and harmony, till you, like a noxious planet, approached towards it."

A Poem written since the riots, in which I am represented as an enemy to God, and the government under which I live, concludes as follows:—

Pure was the breeze that fans this "Seat of Arts,"
 'Ere tainted by thy breath: in every street
 The voice of labour sung away its cares;
 The Church and Sectaries harmonious breath'd
 The genuine spirit of fraternal love:
 But when thy puritanic frown appear'd,
 The heav'ns grew dark, and thy familiar fiend
 Flam'd in the pulpit, thunder'd from the press,
 Till all was uproar, and just vengeance hurl'd
 Sedition's Temples smoking to the ground,

viz.

viz. that of *Highb Bailiff*, to a member of the church of England, they chose to retain the power of nominating, of which they had long been in possession. This power (though I never heard of there being any complaint with respect to the exercise of it) I took much pains, from the beginning of my residence in Birmingham, to persuade the Dissenters to relinquish; and I gradually brought over to my opinion some of the principal of them. The objection to my proposal was that, such was the spirit of party, that without this power every burdensome office would be thrown upon the Dissenters. I always replied that I would willingly risk *that*; thinking that no set of men could make so ungenerous a return for such generous conduct; but that I would even bear every kind of ill-usage, rather than that things should continue as they were.

I spake both to quakers, and to some of the more moderate members of the church of England on the subject; and though one of the latter told me that he knew the temper of the people of Birmingham better than I did, and that he believed no good would come of the measure, I persisted, as it is well known, in my first opinion; and no objection was ever made to it by the Dissenters from any dislike of the measure itself, but only from the apprehension of the ungenerous use that might be made of it.

There are two annual dinners given by the *Low Bailiff*, who has long been a Dissenter, and who has
the

the nomination of that *Jury*, which appoints to all the offices in the town, and also the Low Bailiff for the ensuing year. Having from the habits of a studious life, a dislike to all public entertainments, I never attended more than one of these feasts, the first after my arrival; but I frequently said that I would with pleasure attend the first dinner of the kind that should be given by a member of the church of England. This conduct of mine, of which I can produce abundant evidence, did not, surely, favour much of bigotry.

Till the application to parliament for the repeal of the Test Act, I neither wrote, nor preached, any thing that had any particular relation to the principles of Dissenters, and I sent my sons to the public grammar school, which is conducted wholly by clergymen, and the head master of which, a man of candour, as well as an excellent classical scholar, occasionally visited me.

When Mr. Burn came to Birmingham, having met him at a committee of the public library, I thought I perceived in him great marks of liberality, and on my invitation, he paid me two visits. In Mr. Madan, whom I met at a committee for abolishing the Slave Trade, and who was particularly civil to me there, I flattered myself I had found a clergyman entirely to my mind, and one with whom I might form a pleasing acquaintance. This I mentioned to a particular friend, requesting that he would endeavour to bring it about, as he is ready to witness if called upon. This, surely, did

did not favour of bigotry. Indeed, I have ever lived, and now live, in considerable intimacy with persons of every religious persuasion in this country, the members of the church of England not excepted, though not those residing in Birmingham. The greatest difference of opinion never led me to keep aloof from any man.

Before I left Birmingham I was happy to have begun some pleasing intercourse with Dr. Parr, who had lately come to reside near Warwick. We had visited each other, and I am confident that the continuance of the intercourse would have been a pleasing circumstance to us both, though our religious principles are very different, and he was an avowed opposer of the repeal of the Test Act. When he dined with me, he was purposely met by Mr. Berington, a catholic priest, and Mr. Galton, a quaker. Mr. Porson was also of the party. I have a peculiar pleasure in the society of persons of different persuasions, and more instances of this are given in the *Preface to my Letters to Mr. Burn*, now published together with my *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. Dr. Parr, however, gave great offence to the clergy, and the high church party in Birmingham, by introducing some praise of me into a sermon of his, preached at the new church before our acquaintance commenced.

The first difference that I had with any of the clergy in Birmingham, arose from four of them withdrawing

withdrawing from our public library because my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* had been voted into it; a measure to which, it is well known, that I gave no countenance, but had always opposed, on the idea that it would be better to omit purchasing any books of controversy, till the library should be better stocked with books of other kinds, and more generally interesting. Finding, however, the funds of the library sufficiently ample, and a disposition in many persons, members of the establishment, as well as Dissenters, to read on these, as well as on other subjects, without the obligation of purchasing the books for themselves, I at length concurred with them; but on the express condition that in every interesting controversy, books on both sides should be equally purchased; and I myself generally recommended such as were against my opinions. At length, however, the party opposed to me gained the ascendancy, which they still keep, in the conduct of the library, which was wholly new modelled by myself; and in this I quietly acquiesced, and withdrew from the committee, though I continued a member of the society. I appeal to my townsmen whether my whole conduct in this business was not uniformly open and generous. It had, however, an unfavourable effect in increasing the animosity against the Dissenters, who in this were joined by the more moderate churchmen.

But the great increase of party spirit in the town, and what, to all appearance, contributed most

most to the fatal catastrophe, the cause of which we are now investigating, arose from the application of the Dissenters for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, the nature and tendency of which were strangely misapprehended by the great body of the clergy, and other zealous members of the church of England. For had the repeal taken place, without their opposition, and with the concurrence of the court, no difference whatever would have been perceived in our condition, and our interest as a dissenting body would probably have suffered by it, as indeed many of us were well aware.

As the case now is, few Dissenters are, in fact, excluded from any civil office which they wish to serve, so that the repeal would only have removed a mode of admission to them, highly disgraceful to religion in general, peculiar to this country, and which was not originally intended to affect Dissenters, many of whom were at that time in the habit of communicating with the church of England, though the practice has become less frequent since. And whatever tends to mix us with the world at large, is well known to lead us to think, and to act, as the world does, and consequently to lessen our zeal as Dissenters, and bring us to conformity with the established church.

On this principle great numbers of the most intelligent Dissenters were from the first more than indifferent

indifferent to the measure, and sincerely wished that we might remain as we were in that respect; and I believe it was as much a regard to the honour of the nation, and of christianity, as for any positive advantage to themselves, that any Dissenters concerned themselves about it. The effect has shewn the truth of these apprehensions. The number of Dissenters had been evidently diminishing before the late application, and they are greatly increased since, both in Birmingham and in many other parts of the kingdom.

Also religion in general, with the peculiar tenets of it, having by this means been brought into notice, and more public discussion, the increase of *unitarians*, whose sentiments are the most opposite to those of the church of England, has been in much more than a ten-fold proportion. These converts to unitarianism consist chiefly of the middle, and some of the higher rank of persons, men who are known to read, and to think for themselves, and who of course have influence with others; so that there is now a moral certainty of this doctrine continuing to prevail in this and other countries.

Before the late applications to Parliament, and the violent opposition which the clergy made to them, the different classes of Dissenters were hostile to, and had little communication with, each other. But the opposition then made to their claims, (claims which we think to be founded in natural justice,

justice, on the clear principle that all who contribute to defray the expences of government should have equal access to its honours and emoluments, whatever be their religious faith) has brought us to feel a common interest, and has united us as one body, from one end of the kingdom to the other; so that we can act in concert, as we are now in the habit of doing. This happy union strengthens every day, and in consequence of it religious bigotry in general is much decreased among us. We now attend more to the great things in which we all agree, and less to those with respect to which we differ from each other. On these accounts the strength of the Dissenters, has been greatly increased by the clerical opposition to our claims. So wretched has been the policy of our enemies, apprehending danger where there was even less than none, and having no apprehension at all of what is real.

In this business, however, whether there be merit or demerit in it, I had nothing to do. I did not so much as hear of the intention of applying to Parliament for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts till it was determined upon by the Dissenters in London.

Had I been consulted, I should rather have advised an application for the repeal of that Act of King William which makes it eventually confiscation of goods, and imprisonment for life, to deny the doctrine of the trinity. This is a case of
simple

simple toleration, as we should only have desired exemption from positive punishment, for maintaining opinions which we deem important, contrary to those of the state, and we should have had the better plea, as it is the great, though vain boast of this country, that here *toleration is complete*, whereas for these twenty years last past, I have walked at large only by the connivance of my neighbours, and my opponents have not omitted to hold out to me the terror of this law which hangs over my head.

They who, in their speeches in Parliament, quoted my writings, as an authority with the Dissenters in general, were as ignorant of the Dissenters, as they were of the maxims of sound policy. If I had had any weight with the body of Dissenters at that time, we should have joined the Catholics, who generously made the proposal, in applying for the repeal of all the penal laws in matters of religion. But that golden opportunity was suffered to pass by, and I fear will never more return.

When the measure of applying for the repeal of the Acts above-mentioned (which affect the laity much more than ministers) was taken, I could not help wishing well to it; but well knowing my unpopularity even among the Dissenters (which till of late was much greater than with the members of the established church) I took no active part in promoting it, and what I did was altogether accidental.

Being

Being in London at the time of the first debate on the subject, I heard Mr. Pitt (whom, justly or unjustly, we had been led to consider as friendly to our cause) speak against it; and perceiving, as I thought, his total misapprehension on the subject, I addressed a *Letter* to him relating to the situation of Dissenters, and on other collateral subjects, especially the state of the established church, both here and in Ireland. This *Letter* gave great offence. But I appeal to the impartial public, whether, though written with some degree of indignation, at recent, and as we thought, unjust treatment, there be any thing in it unbecoming men and Englishmen, unjustly and ignominiously treated. This *Letter* was written, and published, while I was in London, and therefore had no particular reference to Birmingham. What I did there was as follows.

It being usual on the 5th of November to give our congregations a discourse on some subject relating to *religious liberty*, I made choice of that of the Test Act, and at the request of my hearers the discourse was published. But I will venture to say that it is one of the calmest, and most moderate, of all discourses that was ever written on a political subject.

What, now, was the conduct of the clergy throughout England, and especially at Birmingham, on this occasion? Endeavours were used to render the Dissenters the objects not only of exclusion from civil offices, but of general odium and punishment.

nishment. Dr. Croft's Sermon, and that of Mr. Madan, both delivered at Birmingham, are extant, and the spirit of them was the same with that of hundreds, I may say thousands, that were echoed from other pulpits, charging the Dissenters, in opposition to all history, and even to recent and existing facts, with principles inimical to the government of the country, and to the prince upon the throne; as pure republicans in their hearts, and who would scruple no means to overturn not the church only, but also the state.

Dr. Price and myself were particularly pointed out as seditious and dangerous persons, the very pests of society and unworthy the protection of government. Such language as this is even held to this day, and in spite of the most explicit denial of what is thus laid to our charge, and of every possible species of evidence to the contrary, including the constant language of our serious writings, will, to all appearance, long continue to be held.

Being particularly pointed at by Mr. Madan, and both friends and enemies looking upon me as called upon to make some reply; I did it with great reluctance, as to a clergyman, whom on other accounts, I truly respected, and whom, as living in the same town with me, I might occasionally meet; to say nothing of the farther acquaintance which I had once flattered myself I might make with him. This reply I made in a series

series of *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, and I appeal to any person who has the least pretention to impartiality, whether they be not a mild and good-humoured reply to an unprovoked invective.

I there showed that the Dissenters were, and always have been, the best friends to the present government, that I had myself written much in defence and praise of it; and though being a Dissenter, I, of course could be no friend to the established church, with respect either to doctrine or discipline, I allowed others to judge and act, as I did, for themselves, and that I wished for no alterations but such as should have the general concurrence of the country, and those made in such a manner, as that no person living should be injured by them. This has been my constant language on the subject of reformation in church or state. Mr. Madan replied without retracting any part of his charge. But notwithstanding this, I continued, and concluded my *Letters* with the same good-humour with which I began them.

These Letters were much read both in Birmingham and the neighbourhood, and indeed throughout England. But though they convinced many persons that the Dissenters had been ill used, and that we had much more to say for ourselves than they had imagined, they were far from conciliating the clergy, or the more violent sticklers for the established church.

Other attempts, and some of them of a very infamous kind, were made to render my character odious. Old calumnies, were revived, and new ones invented, concerning my being an enemy to Christianity, and of religion in general; and a clergyman (as there is every reason to think) published an account of my having converted Mr. Silas Deane to atheism, and his confession of it upon his death-bed. This was represented in public prints, and the pamphlet containing the account, was industriously circulated by some of the clergy in Birmingham, and its neighbourhood. At first I neglected the idle story, as sufficiently contradicted by my writings and my whole conduct. Afterwards, however, at the instance of my friends, I published the clearest refutation of it. But even this did not appear to make any favourable impression on my enemies at Birmingham. The offence given by my *Familiar Letters* was never forgiven.

Mr. Burn also published a set of *Letters to me*, in which he charged me with rejecting the testimony of the Apostles concerning the person of Christ; and though I denied the charge, and shewed the absurdity of it, he replied without retracting it. In the *Preface to my Letters to Mr. Burn*, I gave my opinion with great freedom concerning the state of the Dissenters, and the clergy of the established church, warning them of the violence and folly of their conduct, and the probable consequences of it. But the use they made [of this *Preface* was to print *Extracts from it*, so curtailed

tailed and arranged, as to represent me as a mover of sedition, and a dangerous member of society. This printed paper was sent to the bishops, and to all the members of the House of Commons the day before the last debate on the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts, so that it was impossible to counteract the effects of it; and being put into the hands of Mr. Burke, and declaimed upon by him, was of material disservice to our cause. I shewed the unfairness of this proceeding in a *printed letter* sent to the bishops, and all the members of the House of Commons, as theirs had been. But to all appearance this complete justification only tended to exasperate my enemies, and they spared no pains to exasperate others.

The effect of this controversy upon the common people in Birmingham, who were made to believe that, some way or other, both the church and the state were in danger, and that my object was the utter destruction of both, was great and visible enough. On the walls of houses, &c. and especially where I usually went, were to be seen in large characters, MADAN FOR EVER, DAMN PRIESTLEY, NO PRESBYTERIANS, DAMN THE PRESBYTERIANS, &c. &c. At one time I was followed by a number of boys, who left their play, repeating what they had seen on the walls, and shouting out, *Damn Priestley, damn him, damn him for ever, for ever, for ever, &c. &c.* This was, no doubt, a lesson which they had been taught by their parents, and what these, I fear, had learned

from their superiors. Such things as these were certainly unpleasant to me; but I was conscious I had done nothing to deserve such treatment; and despising mere *obloquy*, I was far from suspecting that it would ever lead to the outrages which have since taken place.

In the exultation of the high church party on the defeat of our last application to Parliament, personal danger was apprehended to myself, by some of my more zealous friends; and a number of young men of my congregation came to tell me, that myself and my house were threatened, but that if I chose it, they would undertake to defend both me, and it, at the risk of their lives. I replied that I did not apprehend any danger, and that if any violence was offered to me on that account, I should make no resistance. It has always been my maxim, as may be seen in my writings, and what I have always maintained in conversation, that it becomes christians to bear every kind of insult and violence when it is offered on the account of *religion*, and that nothing but our *civil rights* are to be defended by the sword.

I took no notice of any of the particulars above-mentioned; and though I was told that some of the clergy of the town and neighbourhood were frequently preaching against the Dissenters, and often against myself by name, or by description, I never preached a single sermon on the subject, or wrote any thing more than the pieces above-mentioned,

tioned, which are before the public, and may be examined at the reader's leisure, till the appearance of *Mr. Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution*, a work that has been more generally read than any publication in my time, and which has contributed more than any other to excite a spirit of party; the clergy almost universally approving it, and the low church party and Dissenters as generally condemning it.

My friends well know that I was far from having any intention of animadverting upon this performance, being at that time engaged in other pursuits, and having a real respect for the writer, till I was pressed to undertake it by several of my friends, who were pleased to think me better qualified than most others to reply to what Mr. Burke had advanced on the subject of *Civil Establishments of Christianity*. At their solicitation I wrote my *Letters to Mr. Burke*, and this publication, though a very temperate one, provoked the clergy, and the zealous friends of the establishment still more; and in consequence of this, their efforts to inflame the minds of the populace against the Dissenters in general, and myself in particular, were redoubled, and the profane habit of drinking *Damnation and confusion to the Presbyterians* at the convivial meetings of some persons of better fashion, as well as those of the lower order, was much increased.

So apparent were the marks of extreme bigotry, and the true spirit of persecution at this time, that upon occasion of preaching the *Hackney College Ser-*

men, in April last (and which my friends knew that I long declined) I was led to say, "In another respect, also, we are now in the situation of the primitive christians; as the friends of reformation have nothing to expect from power, or general favour; but must look for every species of abuse and persecution that the spirit of the times will admit of. If even burning alive was a sight that the country would now bear, there exists a spirit which would inflict that horrid punishment, and with as much cool indifference, or savage exultation, as in any preceding age of the world." But though I saw this, and that the marks of this spirit were apparent in various other parts of England, I had no suspicion of its breaking out on the innocent occasion of celebrating the *French Revolution*, and therefore was far from being prepared for any such outrage.

The celebration of this great event by a public dinner at Birmingham was no measure of mine. Indeed, I am well known to all my friends to be averse to public entertainments, and never enjoy myself at them; my habits of life, too long confirmed to be easily altered, being quite opposite to every thing of this nature. However, when the friends of that Revolution proposed it, and wished to have my company, I did not decline their invitation, and we had a meeting or two, partly for that purpose, and partly to settle the rules of a CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY, such as that which is established at Manchester, the chief object of which was to promote a more equal representation of the people

people of this country in Parliament, and we had printed two copies of *general principles of government*, to be subscribed by all the members, and one copy of *particular rules* for our conduct, copied chiefly from those of Manchester; but we had not pleased ourselves with them, and nothing was absolutely settled.

Many persons in different parts of the kingdom, but more especially at Birmingham, thought the celebration of the French Revolution to be a right and a wise measure, in order to conciliate the French nation, and to promote a friendly and commercial intercourse with it. It is well known that the late *commercial treaty* is not popular in France, and it was thought to be impolitic to heighten the dislike of that nation to *this*, by refusing to partake of their joy, in what was known to give them the greatest satisfaction.

With the dinner itself I had, in a manner, nothing to do. I did not so much as suggest one of the proper and excellent *toasts* provided on the occasion, though it was natural for my friends to look to me for things of that kind, if I had interested myself much in it; and when opposition was talked of, and it was supposed that some insults would be offered to myself in particular, I yielded to the solicitations of my friends, and did not attend. Others, however, went on that very account; thinking it mean, and unbecoming Englishmen, to be deterred from a lawful and innocent act, by the fear of lawless insult; and accordingly they

they assembled, and dined, in number between eighty and ninety.

When the company met, a croud was assembled at the door, and some of them hissed, and shewed other marks of disapprobation, but no material violence was offered to any body. Mr. Keir, a member of the church of England, took the chair; and when they had dined, drank the toasts and sung the songs which had been prepared for the occasion, they dispersed. This was about five o'clock, and the town remained quiet till about eight. It was evident, therefore, that the dinner was not the proper cause of the riot which followed: but that the mischief had been pre-concerted, and that this particular opportunity was laid hold of for the purpose.

Some days before this meeting, a few copies of a printed *band-bill* of an inflammatory nature, of which a copy is given in the *Appendix*, No. I. had been found in a public house in the town, and of this great use was made to inflame the minds of the people against the Dissenters, to whom, though without any evidence whatever, it was confidently ascribed. The thing itself did not deserve any notice, and paragraphs of as seditious a nature frequently appear in the public newspapers, and other publications, and (as would, no doubt, have been the case with this) are neglected and forgotten. But the magistrates of Birmingham, and other known enemies to the Dissenters, were loud in their exclamations against it, though perhaps fabricated for the use that was made of it; and a copy
officially

officially sent to the secretaries of state, who ordered a strict enquiry to be made after the author, printer, or distributor; and in consequence of this a reward of an hundred pounds was offered, for the discovery of any of them.

In consequence of all this preparation, we were informed that, though the trade of Birmingham had never been more brisk, so that hands could not be found to manufacture the goods that were ordered, many of the public-houses were that day full of people, whose horrid execrations against the Dissenters were heard into the streets; and it has been asserted that some of the master manufacturers had shut up their work-shops, and thereby left their men at full liberty for any mischief.

It has since appeared that besides the dinner at the Hotel, there were also meetings of the opposite party on this 14th of July; some of whom had distributed copies of a Letter signed by *Dr. Tatbam*. This seemed to increase the animosity of the lower class of people, with whom the common ale-houses were filled. Some of these meetings did not rise from their entertainment so early, or with so much sobriety, as those who dined at the Hotel; and it was at the breaking up of *their* companies that the riots commenced. Let the impartial then judge to which of the dinners the riot that followed is to be ascribed.

Mr. Adam Walker, the ingenious and well known lecturer in natural Philosophy, was passing through

through the town with his wife and family, and dined with me at my own house, for the last time, on that day. Before dinner, I had walked to the town with him, and they left me in the evening. Some time after this, three of my intimate friends, whose houses were situated near the same road, and farther from the town than mine, called upon me to congratulate me, and one another, on the dinner having passed over so well; and after chatting chearfully some time on the subject, they left me just as it was beginning to be dark.

After supper, when I was preparing to amuse myself, as I sometimes did, with a game of backgammon, we were alarmed by some young men rapping violently at the door; and when they were admitted, they appeared to be almost breathless with running. They said that a great mob had assembled at the Hotel, where the company had dined; that after breaking the windows there, they were gone to the New Meeting, and were demolishing the pulpit and pews, and that they threatened me and my house. That they should think of molesting me I thought so improbable, that I could hardly give any credit to the story. However, imagining that perhaps some of the mob might come to insult me, I was prevailed upon to leave the house, and meant to go to some neighbour's at a greater distance from the town; but having no apprehension for the house itself, or any thing in it, I only went up stairs, and put some papers and other things of value, where I thought that any

any persons getting into the house would not easily find them. My wife did the same with some things of hers. I then bade the servants keep the doors fastened; if any body should come, to say that I was gone, and if any stones should be thrown at the windows, to keep themselves out of danger, and that I did not doubt but they would go away again.

At this time, which was about half past nine o'clock, Mr. S. Ryland, a friend of mine, came with a chaise, telling us there was no time to lose, but that we must immediately get into it and drive off. Accordingly, we got in with nothing more than the clothes we happened to have on, and drove from the house. But hearing that the mob consisted only of people on foot, and concluding that when they found I was gone off in a chaise, they could not tell whither, they would never think of pursuing me, we went no farther than Mr. Russell's, a mile on the same road, and there we continued several hours, Mr. Russell himself, and other persons, being upon the road on horseback to get intelligence of what was passing. I also more than once walked about half way back to my own house for the same purpose; and then I saw the fires from the two meeting-houses, which were burning down.

About twelve we were told that some hundreds of the mob were breaking into my house, and that when they had demolished it, they would certainly proceed to Mr. Russell's. We were persuaded, therefore,

therefore, to get into the chaise again, and drive off; but we went no farther than Mr. Thomas Hawkes's on Moseley-Green, which is not more than half a mile farther from the town, and there we waited all the night.

It being remarkably calm, and clear moon-light, we could see to a considerable distance, and being upon a rising ground, we distinctly heard all that passed at the house, every shout of the mob, and almost every stroke of the instruments they had provided for breaking the doors and the furniture. For they could not get any fire, though one of them was heard to offer two guineas for a lighted candle; my son, whom we left behind us, having taken the precaution to put out all the fires in the house; and others of my friends got all the neighbours to do the same. I afterwards heard that much pains was taken, but without effect, to get fire from my large electrical machine, which stood in the library.

About three o'clock in the morning the noises ceased, and Mr. Russell and my son coming to us, said that the mob was almost dispersed, that not more than twenty of them remained, and those so much intoxicated, that they might easily be taken. We therefore returned with him, and about four o'clock were going to bed at his house. But when I was undressing myself for that purpose, news came that there was a fresh accession of some hundreds more to the mob, and that they were
advancing

advancing towards Mr. Russell's. On this we got into the chaise once more, and driving through a part of the town distant from the mob, we went to Dudley, and thence to my son-in-law's, Mr. Finch at Heath-Forge, five miles farther, where we arrived before breakfast, and brought the first news of our disaster.

Here I thought myself perfectly safe, and imagining that when the mischief was over (and I had no idea of its going beyond my own house) and supposing that, as the people in general would be ashamed, and concerned, at what had happened, I might return; thinking also that the area within the walls of the meeting-house might soon be cleared, I intended, if the weather would permit, to preach there the Sunday following, and from this text, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

At noon, however, we had an express from Stourbridge, to acquaint us that the mob had traced me to Dudley, and would pursue me to Heath. To this I paid no attention, nor to another from Dudley in the evening to inform us of the same thing; and being in want of sleep, I went to bed soon after ten. But at eleven I was awaked, and told that a third express was just arrived from Dudley, to assure us that some persons were certainly in pursuit of me, and would be there that night. All the family believing this, and urging me to make my escape, I dressed myself, got on horseback,

horseback, and with a servant rode to Bridgnorth, where I arrived about two in the morning.

After about two hours sleep in this place, I got into a chaise, and went to Kidderminster, on my way to London. Here I found myself among my friends, and, as I thought, far enough from the scene of danger, especially as we continually heard news from Birmingham, and that the mischief did not extend beyond the town. Hearing, particularly, that all was quiet at Dudley, I concluded that there could be no real cause of apprehension at Heath; and being unwilling to go farther than was necessary, I took a horse, and arrived there in the evening.

There, however, I found the family in great consternation at the sight of me; and Mr. Finch just arriving from Dudley, and saying that they were in momentary expectation of a riot there, that the populace were even assembled in the street, and were heard to threaten the meeting-house, the house of the minister, and those of other principal Dissenters, and that all attempts to make them disperse had been in vain, I mounted my horse again, though much fatigued, and greatly wanting sleep.

My intention was to get to an inn about six miles on the road to Kidderminster, where I might get a chaise and in it proceed to that town. No chaise, however, was to be had; so that I was
under

under the necessity of proceeding on horseback, and neither the servant nor myself distinguishing the road in the night, we lost our way, and at break of day found ourselves on Bridgnorth race ground, having ridden nineteen miles, till we could hardly sit our horses.

Arriving at this place a second time, about three o'clock in the morning, we with some difficulty roused the people at an indifferent inn, and I immediately got into bed, and slept a few hours. After breakfast we mounted our horses, and I got a second time to Kidderminster. There, finding that if I immediately took a chaise, and drove fast, I might get to Worcester time enough for the mail-coach, I did so; and meeting with a young man of my own congregation, he accompanied me thither, which was a great satisfaction to me, as he acquainted me with many particulars of the riot, of which I was before ignorant. At Worcester I was just time enough for the coach, and fortunately there was one place vacant. I took it, and travelling all night, I got to London on Monday morning, July 18.

Here I was in a place of safety, and had leisure for rest and reflection. I can truly say, however, that in all the hurry of my flight, and while the injuries I had received were fresh upon my mind, I had not one desponding, or unbenevolent thought. I really pitied the delusion of the poor incendiaries, and the insatiation of those who had deluded them,

D

and

and never doubted but that, though I could not tell *how*, or *when*, good would arise from this, as well as from every other evil. The magnanimity of my wife was never shaken; and, as at other times, she then felt more for others than she did for herself. It was a distressing circumstance, that our daughter was expecting to be brought to bed in about a month, so that she was full of alarm, and her mother could not leave her to accompany me. We were, however, as happy as we could be in this state of forced separation, I with my old friends in London, and she either with our daughter, or with one of the most friendly, generous, and worthy families in the world, in the neighbourhood of Birmingham.

That there were instigators, as well as perpetrators, of these horrid scenes, was sufficiently evident. Most of those who committed the devastations appeared by their profaneness, intoxication, and their disposition to indiscriminate plunder, to have no sense of religion at all, and therefore could only adopt the cry of *church and king* as a pretence. In the midst of their devastations there were always some cool heads mixed with the drunken ones, who rejected all offers of money, and said that they must obey their orders. But the most decisive circumstance was that of *forged letters* being read, one at my house, in the name of Mr. Russell, and another at his, in the name of Mr. Jeffries of London, on purpose to inflame the mob to greater outrages. Whoever be the real author of the
band-bill,

band-bill, certainly they who forged these letters were capable of writing it, for the use that was actually made of it. Indeed, there is nothing too atrocious for such persons not to be capable of.

Being now at my leisure, I wrote my *Address to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, APPENDIX, No. II. and upon the more moderate it had some influence, in counteracting the strange and mischievous accounts that had been every where industriously propagated, in order to throw the blame of the whole transaction upon the Dissenters in general, and myself in particular (See APPENDIX, No. III.) though on others it had a different effect.

In London I found that Mr. W. Russell had just arrived in town, who, next to myself, was the principal object of dislike to the high church party in Birmingham. He came to represent to the ministry a true state of things relating to the riots, and to learn what steps they would take with respect to it. When this was settled, he returned to Birmingham, but not before he had published an account of what had passed at the Revolution dinner, with the toasts that were given on that occasion. (See APPENDIX, No. IV.) On the same day also, as it happened, Mr. Keir published an account of the proceedings, for the Birmingham newspaper (See APPENDIX, No. V.) and soon after a more particular account of the toasts, with observations, in explanation and vindication of them. These gentlemen giving their names, their accounts satisfied the impartial, that

the behaviour of the Dissenters had not been liable to any just censure, and that it was not the dinner, but a deep-rooted animosity against the Dissenters, that was the true cause of all the mischief.

In this situation, what I regretted most was the loss, as I then supposed, of all my *manuscript papers*, for which no reparation could be made. They consisted of the following particulars:

I. My *Diaries* from the year 1752, containing the particulars of almost every day; and at the beginning of each of them I had given the state of my mind, of my affairs in general, and of my prospects, for that year; which it was often amusing, and also instructive, to me, to look back upon.

II. Several large *Common-place Books*, containing the fruits of my reading almost ever since I could read with any degree of judgment.

III. The *Register of my Philosophical Experiments*, and hints for new ones.

IV. All my *Sermons, Prayers, and Forms for administering the Lord's Supper, &c.* many of which I had with great expence got transcribed into a fair long hand.

V. *Notes and a Paraphrase on the whole of the New Testament*, excepting the book of *Revelation*. The whole of it had been delivered from the pulpit, and in a preface to another work, I had promised

promised to publish it. I was within five days (employing my amanuensis three hours a day) of having the whole fairly transcribed for the press. I had also *Notes on all the Psalms* which I had delivered from the pulpit.

VI. *A New Translation of the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes*; having undertaken, in conjunction with several other Unitarians, to make a new Translation of both the Old and New Testament.

VII. *A Series of Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, which was lately opened in Birmingham. These were fairly transcribed, and were to have gone to the press the Monday following; and being on the most friendly terms with the minister, and principal members of that church, I had made an appointment to meet them on the preceding Friday, to read the work to them from the manuscript, in order to be satisfied that I had not misstated any of their doctrines, and that I might hear their objections to what I had written. A rough draft of a great part of these *Letters* happened to be preserved, in consequence of taking a copy of them by Messrs. Boulton and Watt's machine, and from this I have lately published them.

VIII. *Memoirs of my own Life*, to be published after my death.

IX. A great number of *letters* from my friends and learned foreigners, with other papers.

X. A short account of all the persons whose names are introduced into my Chart of Biography, which I intended to publish, though not very soon.

XI: *Illustrations of Hartley's Doctrine of Association of Ideas*, and *farther Observations on the Human Mind*, the publication of which I had promised in the Preface to my *Essay on Education*. This would perhaps have been the most original, and nearly the last, of my publications. The hints and loose materials for it were written in several volumes, not one scrap of which is yet recovered.

XII. Besides these, I had what had cost me much labour, though, as I did not mean to make any public use of them, I do not much regret their loss, viz. A large course of *Lectures on the Constitution and Laws of England*, and another on the *History of England*, which I had read when I was tutor at Warrington, and of which a syllabus may be seen in the former editions of my *Essay on Education*. In the same class of manuscripts, not much to be regretted, I place a great variety of miscellaneous juvenile compositions, and collections of which I occasionally made some, though not much, use.

XIII. My *Last Will, Receipts and Accounts*.

Let

Let any man of letters, arrived, as I am, to near the age of sixty, consider what must have been my accumulation of curious papers of various kinds, from the variety and extent of my pursuits (greater unquestionably than those of most men now living) and think what I could not but have felt for their loss, and their dispersion into such hands as they fell into, and who make, as I hear, the most indecent and improper use of them. This makes the case much worse than that of mere plunder, and the destruction of books and papers by Goths and Vandals, who could not read any of them. It was, however, no small satisfaction to me, to think that my enemies, having the freest access to every paper I had, might be convinced that I had carried on no treasonable correspondence, and that I had nothing to be concerned about besides the effects of their impertinent curiosity.

The destruction of my library did not affect me so much on account of the money I had expended upon it, as the choice of the books; having had particular objects of study, and having collected them with great care, as opportunity served, in the course of many years. It had also been my custom to read almost every book with a pencil in my hand, marking the passages that I wished to look back to, and of which I proposed to make any particular use; and I frequently made an index to such passages on a blank leaf at the end of the book. In consequence of this, other sets of the

same work would not, by any means, be of the same value to me; for I have not only lost the books, but the chief fruit of my labour and judgment in reading them.

Also my laboratory not only contained a set of the most valuable and useful instruments of every kind, and original substances for experiments, but other substances, the results of numerous processes, reserved for farther experiments, as every experienced chymist will suppose; and these cannot be replaced without repeating the processes of many years. No money can repair damages of this kind. Also, several of my instruments were either wholly, or in part, of my own construction, and such as cannot be purchased any where.

Notwithstanding this destruction of my manuscripts, I do not know that such a calamity could have happened at a more convenient time, in the course of the last ten years. Had it been during the composition of my *History of Early Opinions concerning Christ*, that of my *Church History*, or the *New Edition of my Philosophical Works*, I could never have completed, or resumed them; nor without the books which I then had, could I have undertaken what I have done since. Very happily also, I had finished a long course of experiments on the doctrine of *phlogiston*, and the *composition of water*, and my last paper on the subject was just printed for the *Philosophical Transactions*.

One of the most mortifying circumstances in this calamity was the dispersion of a great number of *letters* from my private friends, from the earliest period of my correspondence, into the hands of persons wholly destitute of generosity or honour. These letters I had carefully arranged, so that I could immediately turn to any of them, when I wished to look back to them, as a memorial of former friendships, or for any other purpose. But they were kept in a box which was ordered by my last will to be burned without inspection. Now, however, letters which I did not wish even my executors to see, were exposed, without mercy or shame, to all the world. No person of honour will even look into a letter not directed to himself. But mine have not only been exposed to every curious, impertinent eye, but, as I am informed, are eagerly perused, commented upon, and their sense perverted, in order to find out something against me.

Some of my private papers are said to have been sent to the secretary of state. But secretaries of state, I presume, are *gentlemen*, and consider themselves as bound by the same rules of justice and honour that are acknowledged to bind other men, and therefore, if this be the case, these papers will certainly be returned to me.

Of this kind of ill usage, I do not accuse the illiterate mob, who made the devastation; for few of them, I suppose, could read, but those persons
of

of better education into whose hands the papers afterwards came. Had persons of this class interposed, and exerted themselves, they might, no doubt, have saved the greatest part of *this*, to me most valuable property, for the loss of which (but more especially for the ungenerous use that was made of it) no compensation can be made me.

My numerous correspondents in different countries of Europe, but more especially those who wrote to me in confidence in this country, will be as much affected by this catastrophe as myself. I might, no doubt, have destroyed those letters, and other private papers, myself. But I could not foresee that men would act the part of brutes, without the least regard to law, to common equity, humanity, or decency; and that an event should happen at the close of the eighteenth century, of which it will not be easy to find a parallel for three centuries before. For the persecutions of christians by heathens, and of protestants by papists, were generally conducted by some *rule*; and in matters of *policy* and *religion* some decent regard was still paid to a man's *private concerns*, in which the state had no interest. Not to feel such losses as these, and such usage as this, would be not to be a man. But I am a christian, and I hope I bear them as such, acknowledging the hand of God, as well as that of man, in all events.

I was also much consoled by the *Addresses* I received, not only from particular persons, but from
various

various bodies of men, who interested themselves in my sufferings, Some, if not all of them, I shall insert in the *Appendix*; as they may serve to encourage other persons in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, notwithstanding the utmost malice of their enemies. I need not say that I received the greatest consolation from the addresses of my congregation, and especially those of the younger part of it, to whom I had given particular attention.

REFLECTIONS.

various bodies of men, who interested themselves in my sufferings. Some, it is not all of them, I shall insist in the appearance as they may have to con- courage other persons in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, notwithstanding the threat- enings of their enemies. I need hardly say that I received the greatest consolation from the address of my congregation, and especially those of the younger part of it to whom I had given particular attention.

It was a great pleasure to me to observe the interest which was taken in my sufferings, and the courage which was shown by some of the younger part of the congregation in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, notwithstanding the threatenings of their enemies. I need hardly say that I received the greatest consolation from the address of my congregation, and especially those of the younger part of it to whom I had given particular attention.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant.

404

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER the preceding detail of *facts*, I now proceed to lay before my readers a series of *Reflections* to which they have given occasion, and I hope they are such as will not be without their use; and then, great as my loss has been stated to be, it will not be the subject of any regret.

SECTION I.

Of the Power of Resentment to prevent Compassion.

I CANNOT help observing on this occasion, as on a thousand others, how much the least cause of resentment tends to stifle every emotion of sympathy and compassion.

Had any person whatever spent a great part of his life in the merely innocent employment of collecting medals, watching with the utmost anxiety every opportunity of completing his suite; had another given the same time to a collection of shells, fossils, prints, or books of any particular class, without

without any farther view than that of amusing himself and his friends; and any of his neighbours, who knew in what manner, and how long, he had been employed, had come, and destroyed the labours of his life in an hour, there are few persons, I believe, who would not have felt for the injury. For every man's labours are of value to himself; and every man has a natural right to enjoy the fruit of his labours, provided they do not interfere with the enjoyments of others. An injury of this kind would be considered as an injury done to society itself, which engages for the protection of every individual in the quiet enjoyment of his innocent gratifications and pursuits, whatever they be. Every person would have made the case his own, and have considered what he himself would have felt, not after having spent his life in the same pursuits (because for them he might have had no particular taste) but in any pursuit equally pleasing to him, and would have resented the injury with the greatest sensibility.

Had this person's pursuits been of acknowledged utility to the public, and in the eye of the world done credit to his country, and to his age; had they been the labours of a Boyle, a Newton, or a Franklin, or those of a Pope, an Addison, or a Locke, that had been thus wantonly and maliciously destroyed, all the world in a manner, and his country in particular, would have taken fire at the injury, and have thought no punishment too great for it.

But

But let *politics* or *religion* be concerned; let the curious collector, the naturalist, the poet, or the philosopher, be suspected to be of an unpopular party in either, and the very circumstance that would have filled his countrymen with compassion for him, and with rage against his plunderers, would make many rejoice in the mischief; and without the least regard to the innocence, or public merit, of his pursuits, they would receive a gratification from the idea of their hereby having it in their power to give him and his friends the more sensible pain. Nay, provided they conceived that any advantage would accrue from it to their party, they would take a savage pleasure in destroying him, and his labours together.

Such has been the scene exhibited at Birmingham, and I wish it may prove an instructive lesson to mankind. I do not say what I have been, or what I have done. But had I been a Boyle, a Newton, or a Franklin, or had I had ten times the merit of each, or of all of them, I am confident, from what I have heard and observed, that this circumstance would only have been an excitement to my enemies to the mischief they have done me. The higher I had stood in the good opinion of my friends, or of the public, the greater pleasure would they have taken in pulling me down.

This has, moreover, been done by persons who do not want private virtue, by persons of honour, justice, and feeling in common life; and who, if I had

had not been obnoxious to them on account of my *opinions*, would have relieved me in distress, and have done me any kindness in their power; nay who, if they had had any knowledge of literature, or science, might perhaps have been proud of having me for a townsman and acquaintance, and have taken a pleasure in shewing strangers the place where I lived.

Had I been a clergyman of the church of England, of little or no reputation, and the injury been done by Dissenters, no punishment would have been thought sufficient for the perpetrators of so much wickedness; and in the eyes of the nation, the whole sect would have been thought deserving of extirpation. Like the death of Charles I. the guilt of it would have been entailed upon our latest posterity.

I was forcibly struck with this idea on seeing a most ingenious imitation of plants in paper, cut and painted so like to nature, that, at a very small distance, no eye could have perceived the difference; and by this means they were capable of being preserved from the attacks of insects, so as to be greatly preferable to any *hortus ficcus*. It appeared to me that weeks, and in some cases months, must have been employed on some single plants, so exquisitely were they finished.

What would this ingenious and deserving young lady have felt, how would her family and friends, have

how would all botanists, though they should only have heard of the ingenious contrivance, and of the labour and time she had spent upon her plants; nay, how would the country in general have been filled with indignation, had any envious female neighbour come by force, or stealth, and thrown all her flowers into the fire, and thus destroyed all the fruits of her ingenuity, and patient working for years, in a single moment. And yet all this, excellent as it was, might with certainty have been done again, and perhaps in an improved manner. If this particular lady had not had time, or inclination, to do the same work over again, she might have instructed others, and precautions might have been taken to prevent such a misfortune a second time.

But the havoc that was made in almost as short a space of time in my library and laboratory, neither myself or any body else can repair; and yet thousands, and ten thousands, I have no doubt, are so far from feeling any sympathy with me, or my friends, on the occasion, that they rejoice in it, and would rejoice the more in proportion as the irreparable mischief had been greater*.

If the same malicious female should not only have thrown this lady's flowers into the fire, but ransacked her apartments, and, getting possession of all her private letters, have amused herself with

* So far am I from being considered an *injured person* by many, that they scruple not to consider me as the proper cause of the death of those who were executed for the riots; in short, nothing less than a *murderer*. Such is the idea conveyed by the author of a ballad in imitation

reading them, and publishing them in all the neighbourhood, in order to do her all the injury in her power, would not the crime be thought worthy of the severest punishment, as a violent breach of all the bonds of society? And yet in my case, this very outrage has been committed without any sense of guilt in the perpetrators, or the by-standers, of the same party. Such is the baneful influence of party spirit.

SECTION II.

My coming to Birmingham not the Cause of the Party Spirit in the Place.

IT will be evident from the preceding narrative that my coming to Birmingham was by no means the cause, as is now asserted, of the party spirit which so unhappily prevails in that place. Every thing that I wrote respecting the established church was occasioned by the writings of others against the Dissenters. In no case whatever was I

tation of the song of *William and Margaret*, intitled, *The Ghost and the Doctor*, sent to me by the post from Chester.

This is the dark and fearful hour,
When Ghosts their wrongs disclose.
Now graves give up their dead, to haunt
The guilty soul's repose.
Bethink thee, Priestley of thy fault,
Thy love of civil strife;
And give me back my honest fame,
And give me back my life.

the

the aggressor; and I never troubled even my own congregation with a single discourse on the subject, though this had been done again and again by my predecessor Mr. Bourne; and I never heard that he was particularly complained of on that account.

The long controversy I had on the subject of the *trinity*, which, however, had no particular respect to Birmingham, was the consequence of the attack of Bishop Horsley, and others of the clergy, on one part of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. All my *Defences of Unitarianism*, written in the course of this controversy, are before the Public, and I appeal to all impartial readers, if they be not calm replies to some of the most virulent modes of attack of which there are any examples in this, or any other country. The Bishop's professed object was to destroy my credit *in toto*, so that nothing that I should ever write on the subject might be regarded.

Besides, what did I do, urged as I was, in every possible method, more than propose my *opinions*, with the *reasons* on which they were founded. There was no *violence* in this. And cannot opinion be opposed by opinion, and argument by argument? I seriously think that the doctrine of the *divine unity*, as opposed to that of the *trinity*, is of the greatest importance in christianity; and it is likewise my opinion, that *civil establishments of christianity* are the bane of it, tending to increase, and to perpetuate, every abuse that has been introduced

into it. But many other persons have maintained the same opinions, and have held the same language, before me. I, therefore, think it a peculiar honour to my writings, that my adversaries have at length found no method of replying to them so effectual as destroying my property, and attempting my life; instigating a furious mob to commit such ravages on general literature, as the European world has not known since the ages of acknowledged barbarism.

SECTION III.

Of Dissenters meddling with Politics.

IT is said by many that, if I had not meddled with *politics* the riots in Birmingham would not have taken place. But this also is an hypothesis not supported by facts. If the indignation of the populace had been excited against me as a politician, and not as a Dissenter, why did they begin with demolishing the meeting-house, before they proceeded to my own house, or made any attempt upon my person? Why did they demolish the Old Meeting, the ministers of which had never appeared in a political character? And what had Mr. Taylor and Mr. John Ryland ever done in a political capacity? The rioters evidently made no distinction between political Dissenters and

and others, but confined their outrages to those who are generally called the more liberal, or unitarian Dissenters, as conceiving them to be peculiarly hostile to the church, and therefore to the state, as connected with the church.

But what have been my writings as a politician? They are very inconsiderable, and never, that I understood, gave much offence. All the time that I was with the Marquis of Lansdowne, which was seven years, in which I had no employment as a minister, I never wrote a political pamphlet, or paragraph. My studies were then, as before, and since, *theology, philosophy, and general literature.*

My *Essay on the First Principles of Government*, which, of all my writings, may be thought the most offensive to the friends of arbitrary power, was published more than twenty years ago, and never proceeded farther than a second edition, which also has been on sale almost twenty years; so that it could not have given any recent provocation. The political part of my *Lectures on History and General Policy*, is much in favour of the civil part of our present constitution, though not without hinting at such improvements in it, as many upright and enlightened persons of all denominations, wish for.

Supposing, however, that I had written much more largely on politics, particular as well as general, is this a subject that Dissenters must not

E 3 touch?

touch? As equal citizens, have we not an equal interest in the concerns of the state; and does it not behove us to watch over that interest, as much as others, whose stake in it is not greater than ours?

When the government was friendly to the Dissenters, our rulers were glad enough to avail themselves both of our pens and of our swords. Our *right* to give our opinion in affairs of state was not then questioned; and what has happened to affect that right since? It is plain that it is only our exercise of that right that gives offence. No complaint was ever made of the conduct of Mr. Bradbury, who was continually preaching political sermons, and who had a great hand in promoting the accession of the house of Hanover, except by the clergy, who were generally enemies of that accession.

Though no change has taken place in our general principles, our opinions are now supposed to be unfavourable to the maxims of those who have the conduct of administration; and hence the new language, that Dissenters, and particularly dissenting ministers, ought to confine themselves to matters of religion; and that, content with our toleration, we ought not even to reflect on the established church, which is now considered as an essential part of the state. I was never complained of for having meddled with *philosophy*, which is as foreign to my proper profession as *politics*.

But

But in what sense can this be called a *free country*, if every citizen be not at full liberty to deliver his opinion, in speaking or writing, on any subject whatever, without the dread of civil penalties, legally or illegally inflicted? And how is our religion even *tolerated*, if we be debarred the privilege of writing in its defence, and freely advancing whatever we may deem of importance for that purpose?

If umbrage be taken at Dissenters for writing on any particular subject, let us, at least, be prohibited by *law*, and let not any man be punished for doing what no known law makes to be a crime, and, which in itself may be highly meritorious. Let an Act of Parliament be made to declare it felony, or treason, for any Dissenter (or if that be thought too much, for any dissenting minister) to write a political pamphlet, finding fault with the constitution, or arraigning the conduct of administration, and we shall then consider what is to be done in these new circumstances.

Some weak politicians, and high churchmen, as an excuse for not appearing displeased at the riots in Birmingham, which did not affect the Calvinistic Dissenters, allege that the Dissenters of this day are a very different set of persons from those of former times, for whom the Act of Toleration was provided. This, no doubt, is true. All bodies of men have changed in a course of time, and the Dissenters among the rest. The clergy of the

established church are by no means the same that they were at the Revolution; for they were then generally the enemies of the present reigning family, though they now make so great a boast of their being the friends of it. With respect to their religious sentiments, they are greatly changed indeed since the time of Queen Elizabeth, being, from Predestinarians, become almost universally Arminians; and till of late the more learned of their body are well known to have been Arians. There has also been a great change in the general sentiments of many of the Roman Catholics. But, to a politician, the only question is whether any of these changes of opinion give them less right to the protection of civil government.

The principal change in the Dissenters is similar to that which has taken place among the members of the church of England. They have receded farther from the system of Calvinism. Many of them became Arians, and many are now Unitarians, heretofore more generally called Socinians. But what has this to do with civil government? Can it be pretended that the man who confines his adoration to *one God*, and who calls this one God *the God and Father of Jesus Christ*, is a worse subject of civil government than he who, in addition to the worship of this one God, pays equal divine honours to Jesus Christ, and also to another divine person called *the Holy Ghost*, or than he who adds to all these the worship of the Virgin Mary, and of all the saints and angels in the Popish calendar?

The

The question is surely too ridiculous to be discussed. Why then should unitarian Dissenters be more exposed to lawless violence, and left out of the protection of the state, than trinitarian Dissenters, or than the Roman Catholics, to whom the favour of government has of late been very justly extended.

It is true also, that many of the Dissenters are of late become enemies to all civil establishments of religion. But so also are many Catholics, and even many members of the church of England itself. And in what sense are they enemies, and how are they to be dreaded, and guarded against, as such? They are only enemies in point of *argument*. They think it would be better for all states not to trouble themselves about religion, or at least not to give any preference to one form of it more than to another. But this is not an opinion for which they will disturb the peace of any state. They wish to have *this*, as well as every other great question, interesting to man and to society, to be freely discussed. But what is the proper use and termination of *discussion*, besides the prevalence of *truth* and of *general happiness*? No man who does not persist in supporting what he himself believes to be false and mischievous, will ever say the contrary. Why then should not Dissenters, and all other persons, be tolerated in maintaining *this*, as well as any other opinion, though it has a remote relation to practice, as, indeed, every opinion of much importance necessarily has.

Whatever

Whatever were my political sentiments, though I should be an avowed republican, and, as a person high in office, but, in this respect, of little information, lately said of me, "ready to destroy the king, the house of Lords, and house of Commons too*," as this mischief, unless I were the dragon of Wantley, could only be effected by *argument*, by convincing the people, that such descriptions of men were useless, or mischievous, to them, it would be no justifiable reason for inflicting on me what I have suffered.

If my publications, be they what they will, be not contrary to law, but merely sophistical, let them be answered. My enemies will hardly say that my abilities as a writer are such, that, even without the advantage of *truth*, I can out-write all my opponents, and, in spite of all their efforts, get the great body of the people on my side. And till this be done the state is in no manner of danger from me. If by writing, or acting, I expose myself to the censure of the law, let it have its course; but let not persons, under the pretence of supporting *government*, encourage lawless violence, subversive of all government whatever.

* Such language as this may be said to have been unintentionally the cause of the riots in Birmingham, with as much probability as the speech of king Henry II. was that of the murder of Becket. The known, or the supposed, wishes of men in power do not always require to be accompanied with positive orders. They should, therefore, be particularly cautious what they say. The person above-mentioned added, "As to Paine he is no Dissenter, and therefore we cannot take him up." On this I leave my reader to make his own remarks, and some of a sufficiently serious nature cannot fail to occur to him.

If by our writings any person be injured in his private character, or affairs, Dissenters are punishable by law, like other citizens. But public measures, and public characters, have always been, and it is to be hoped, always will be, open to public animadversion in this country. Otherwise, there is an end of all true liberty; or if from this liberty the Dissenters alone are excluded, it is no free country for *us*, whatever it may be for others. Whenever I find myself debarred the exercise of the invaluable privilege of perfect freedom of speech and writing, I shall consider it as a signal for my departure to some other part of the world, where it can be enjoyed without molestation.

SECTION IV.

The Bigotry of the High Church Party the true Cause of the Riots.

THAT the true source of the late riots in Birmingham was *religious bigotry*, and the animosity of the high church party against the Dissenters, and especially against the Presbyterians and Unitarians, and not the commemoration of the French Revolution, is evident from all that has passed *before, at, and after*, the day.

In the public houses where the people were inflaming themselves with liquor, all that day, and
some

some time before, there were heard execrations of the most horrid kind against *the Presbyterians*. One person was heard not only to wish *damnation* to them, but that "God Almighty would make a "week's holiday for the purpose of damning them." The mob did not arrive at the Hotel till more than two hours after the company had left it, and there they demanded only *myself*, who had not been there. No part of their vengeance fell upon any churchman, whether at the dinner or not. After demolishing the two meeting-houses, and every thing belonging to *me*, their next objects were the houses of Mr. Taylor and Mr. John Ryland, who were well known to have been much averse to the scheme of the Dinner; and during the whole course of the outrages, the constant cry was CHURCH AND KING, and DOWN WITH THE PRESBYTERIANS.

That the celebration of the French Revolution was not the true cause of the riots, has indeed sufficiently appeared from the narrative part of this work. That the plan was laid some time before, and that proper persons were provided to conduct it, is probable from this circumstance, that those in the mob who directed the rest (who were evidently not of the lowest class, and who were sometimes called their *leaders*) were not known to hundreds of all descriptions of the inhabitants of the town, who observed them attentively; so that persons who were no Dissenters, concluded that they came from a distance, and probably from London. The proper Birmingham mob were often persuaded to

to desist from their attempts, till they were joined by these men, who both instigated them to mischief, and directed them how to proceed in the shortest and most effectual manner.

If there be any foundation for this supposition, the plan of the riots must have been laid some time before, and of course, have been entirely independent both of the *band-bill* and of the *Revolution dinner*, any father than the latter directed to the proper time for the execution of the scheme, as these directors must have been engaged before hand. Time, it is hoped, will throw some light on this dark business. It was probably intended to humble and intimidate the Dissenters, by some persons who thought it more prudent to do it by a mob, than by legal methods.

That the storm was directed solely against those that are commonly called the more liberal Dissenters, and not the Calvinistic ones, was evident from the whole course of it, in which the houses and meeting-houses of the latter were spared. The only exception was the house of Mr. Hutton who attends public worship at Carr's Lane, but whose son and daughter belong to the New Meeting. It is also thought that he was obnoxious to the lower classes of the people on account of the strict and exemplary discharge of his duty in the Court of Requests. Let us now see what passed subsequent to the event.

The

The exultation of the high church party, not only in Birmingham, but through the kingdom in general, on the success of this crusade, was undisguised and boundless. All the newspapers both in town and country, in the conduct of which they had particular influence, were full of the grossest abuse of the Dissenters, and especially of myself, and such narratives of the proceedings were published as cannot be accounted for from mistake, or misapprehension, but must have been wilfully fabricated for the worst of purposes. Of this I have, in the APPENDIX, No. III. given one example from the paper called THE TIMES.

There were many of the high church party who did not hesitate to say that, if the mischief had terminated with the destruction of my house, and every thing belonging to *me*, all had been well. Some openly lamented that the mob had not seized me, or that I had not perished in the conflagration. One clergyman in a public assize sermon, called our sufferings *wholesome correction*; and another declared that, if all my writings were put together, and myself were placed on the top of them, he should rejoice to set fire to the pile.

Many of the high church party were so far from lamenting my sufferings, or complaining of the illegal manner in which the mischief was done, that they scrupled not to justify it, on the pretence, though absolutely groundless, that my writings were

were hostile to the *state*, if not directly, yet indirectly so, as being hostile to the *church*. One instance of this, and one of the most moderate of its kind, I shall give in the APPENDIX, No. VI. on account of the singular circumstance of its being printed together with my own *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, and thrown into many houses in London, with the title of SELF-MURDER, or the DOCTOR TRIED AND CONVICTED ON HIS OWN EVIDENCE.

The strange violence of the same party spirit also appeared by a *hand-bill*, which was distributed in London the day after my arrival there, of which a copy is given, APPENDIX, No. VII. This could only be intended to point me out as a proper object of destruction, by some person who wanted the courage, though not the will, to dispatch me *himself*.

At the same time I received an anonymous letter, from a person who said "he was concerned for my misfortunes and my folly," advising me to "have a strict guard on my future conduct;" adding, "Depend upon it, if you proceed to foment disturbances in this place, nobody can answer for your safety. I can assure you the people of this country will not see their happy constitution insulted by any man."

The same spirit was but too apparent during the trials; the most notorious of the rioters being acquitted

acquitted by the jury, against the clearest evidence, to the astonishment of the judge, and all the court, and their acquittal was received with the loudest applause by the surrounding audience. Nor was this indecent exultation confined to those of the lower class, who were heard to wish "that the Birmingham coin might circulate through the kingdom." Two persons of better condition, as I was informed, meeting in the Town Hall at Warwick, immediately after the acquittal of two of the principal rioters, one of them observed to the other, that they "had succeeded beyond their expectations, and that since those two *bearty cocks*" (as he called them) "were safe, he did not much care for the rest." The poor wretches who were left to be hanged, it is presumed, were such as knew no secrets. This very much resembles the case of *Demareé*, who was condemned for burning a Meeting-house in the time of Queen Ann, but was afterwards pardoned, and who, in the report of the trial, by judge Foster, is called "one of Dr. Sacheverell's ablest advocates."

We still have confidence in the justice of our country with respect to our *damages*. As to *lives*, we never wished to take any more than might be deemed necessary for our own future security, and the peace of the country. We shall still be sufferers in common with others, and much more than they, with respect to things for which no indemnification can be made us.

They

The same high church spirit prevailed through most parts of England, and in places where I had nothing to do. Similar outrages were threatened, and apprehended, at Manchester; and it is thought they would have taken place there, as well as at Birmingham, if some soldiers had not been stationed in that town. Many are of opinion that if Dr. Price had been living, the storm would have fallen at Hackney in preference to Birmingham. A friend of mine at Exeter, who had invited me to spend a few weeks with him this summer, said that he durst not now receive me. The Dissenters were also threatened by the high church party at Bristol, at Taunton, at Maidstone, and other places very distant from each other. However, things wore a better aspect in the northern, and in some of the eastern parts of the kingdom. I had friends who offered me an asylum at Leeds, Norwich, and Ipswich.

It will not be easy to produce an example of treatment so merciless and shameful as mine has been; and yet the high church party are perpetually saying, that, though the proceeding has been *irregular*, I have not, in fact, suffered more than I *deserved*. As to my *manuscripts*, they say that the loss of one part of them, viz. the philosophical ones, is sufficiently compensated for by the loss of the other, viz. the *theological* ones; so that I have my deserts, and the public is on the whole no loser. This, however, is a virtual acknowledgment that, in their apprehensions, there was some-
F thing

thing peculiarly formidable in my theological writings, and that they found it easier to dispose of them in any other way than by answering them. This conduct is as weak as their arguments have always been; since, as was the case with the books of the Sybils, the destruction of some of my writings increases the value of those that are preserved; and by this most convincing proof of the success of *my* writings, other persons will be excited to write, though I should be so overwhelmed by my misfortunes, as to be incapacitated from writing any more.

Never shall *I* be heard to rejoice in the destruction of any of the performances of my opponents. On the contrary, I have always wished, as my writings will evidence, that they had been more numerous, in order that their futility might more clearly appear. But my adversaries must have found that this conduct would not so well suit *them*, and therefore that their wisdom was not to produce any books of their own, but to destroy mine.

On this occasion*, which would have called forth the commiseration of generous adversaries,

* In the anonymous manuscript ballad, mentioned before, one of the persons lately executed for the riots, represented as a man of "honest fame" and a "simple zealot," appears to me, and reproaches me as the "professed priest of sedition," whose object it has been to preach the destruction of all order, as the cause of that death, which in justice I ought to suffer. After this I am made to rise "raving from my bed," and to "burn my pen," with a resolution never to write again. To this is added *quod sit omnes boni piique ex imis pectoribus precantur*. But the zealots of Birmingham, and this martyr to the church of England

there have appeared stronger marks of virulence against the Dissenters than have been known for many years before. Not a grain of merit has been allowed to us as a compensation for the crimes of which we are accused; and we are particularly charged with the greatest ingratitude against the government under which we live.

Dr. Tatham of Oxford, exulting over us on this occasion, speaks of the Dissenters as *graciously indulged*. But whether is it *our* system of religion, or *his*, that is most graciously indulged, and which of them is best intitled to this indulgence? Will a mere parliamentary sanction give any form of religion a preference in the eye of God and of reason; and if this should be a case in which the judgment of man shall be found to differ from that of God, it will by no means be the first of the kind. The time is approaching when every thing of this nature will be weighed in a juster balance than they usually are at present, and while we are all waiting for this final decision, let us be humble and forbearing.

But though many of the clergy expressed the most rancorous sentiments against us, there have appeared on this occasion among them men of

England among the rest, took a much more natural method to silence me than this ballad maker (probably a clergyman) of Chester. What he and his friends only *prayed for*, they used the proper means to secure. That they were disappointed in their scheme was not their fault. They may succeed better in a second attempt.

the most liberal minds and principles, who expressed the greatest abhorrence of the conduct and sentiments of the rest of their body, and who, together with some generous minded laity of the establishment, were among the first to afford me the most substantial assistance.

SECTION V.

Of the Pretence that Government was adverse to the Dissenters and favoured the Rioters.

IT was unfortunately a very general opinion that *Government* favoured the violent proceedings against the Dissenters at Birmingham. It was the constant cry of the rioters, in the course of their ravages, "We have nothing to fear. The justices are for us, Government is for us;" and when they were told the troops were coming, they said the foldiers were on their side. When the king's proclamation, offering the reward of an hundred pounds for the discovery and conviction of any person concerned in the riot was published, some of the people were heard to cry, "Is *he* then turned Presbyterian, and are we to be hanged for this?" Similar language was held by some who ought to have known better.

This

This is a circumstance which it greatly concerns the governors of a country to attend to, if they wish to preserve the peace of it, and extend their protection alike to all the subjects. For if any small part of the community, and especially such members of it as are least disposed to violence, be held out, or imagined to be held out, to the rest of the community, as *unworthy of protection*, they will be considered as in a state of *proscription*, and proper objects of persecution, exposed to every insult; and they will have no resource but in temporary self defence, and final emigration. And surely the experience of the last century must have shewn this country the impolicy, if not the wickedness, of such irritation.

The Dissenters have no mob to oppose to such abandoned wretches as committed the outrages at Birmingham; and yet it is now pretended that if the high church party had not destroyed our houses, and places of public worship, we should have destroyed theirs. But admitting that the Dissenters are *knaves*, they are not *fools*, or rather *madmen*, as they must have been to have attempted violence in their situation, unless every one of them had been conscious to himself of having the strength of Samson, and that he was a match for a thousand of his enemies.

But when did Dissenters attempt any thing of the kind? There are instances enow upon record of similar outrages being committed *upon* the Dissenters,

senters, in various parts of the kingdom; but no example of any being committed by them. They are universally a sober and orderly people; and whatever they may think of other people's opinions, they have no idea of promoting their cause by force. Not one Independent, Baptist, or Methodist, I am confident, had any hand in the riot at Birmingham, but only those members of the church of England (if they can be said to be the members of any church) who are in fact destitute of all sense of religion; and of such consists a very great proportion of the inhabitants of Birmingham, and all other large manufacturing towns. In the height of the riot they were addressed by the magistrates, and other respectable members of the church of England, who then thought they had done mischief enough, and wished them to proceed no farther, by the appellation of *Friends and Fellow-churchmen*. See APPENDIX, No. VIII.

It cannot be denied that a crime has been committed, and of the greatest enormity in a civilized country. Immense property has been destroyed, houses burned, lives endangered, and the peace of many families interrupted, by an illegal insurrection, in defiance of all law and good order, and that these violences were committed on the pretence of supporting *the church and the king*. It certainly, therefore, behoves both the church and the government, to exculpate themselves, and to make every satisfaction to the sufferers that the nature of the case will admit of.

The

The violences were committed by the lower orders of the people, but if the friends of the church and of the king in the higher ranks had been in earnest to suppress the riot, it might, no doubt, have been effected before any mischief had been done. If the magistrates, and other principal inhabitants of the town, belonging to the church of England, on the first hearing of the rioters going to the New Meeting, had interposed, by repairing to the place, and earnestly protesting against the violence, even that meeting-house would not have suffered. Had there not been time for *this* (which, however, there certainly was) their interposition might have prevented the destruction of the second meeting-house. At least, with the assistance of a few men with fire-arms, which they could easily have commanded, they might have prevented all the mischief at my house, with every thing that followed. There was, therefore, at least a criminal remissness in the friends of the church and the king. But the clearest facts shew that there was more than remissness on the part of many persons of better condition, and nothing that they ever did shewed a real disapprobation of the conduct of the mob previous to the demolition of my house, but only a wish that they should proceed no farther than that; and this on no other account than that of the *expence* it would be to themselves. This is evident from the hand-bills last referred to.

Making every allowance for the perpetrators and abettors of these horrid scenes at the moment,

there has been time for reflection and compunction since; and the eyes of the nation, and of all Europe, are open to see what part both the town and neighbourhood, and above all the government of the country, will take in the case. On the part of the town and neighbourhood nothing favourable to justice has appeared as yet.

Out of several thousand rioters evidence has been procured against no more than fifty-two. Of these not so many as twenty have been apprehended, and of these only five have been condemned, and three executed*. Instead of promoting an inquiry concerning the instigators of this mob, and censuring the manifest remissness of the magistrates, a town's meeting has voted the latter thanks and rewards for the part they acted; and an *Address to the King* reflecting more on the Dissenters, as friends to innovation, than on the rioters†. The whole town and neighbourhood, therefore, must

* On occasion of the riots in London, in which it is probable that fewer persons were concerned than in those at Birmingham, one hundred and thirty-five were tried, fifty-nine convicted, and twenty-six executed; and I believe merely for what they did in the riots. Whereas it is remarkable that of the very few who were convicted on occasion of the riots in Birmingham, all who were executed were men of notorious bad character in other respects. And certainly the execution of men who were universally considered as the pests of society, is no punishment for this particular offence, and therefore no warning against the commission of the like; since it will be concluded, that if men be chargeable with nothing but destroying the property of the Dissenters, they have no punishment to fear. For either the jury will not find them guilty, or the case will be so represented to the king that a pardon will certainly be procured.

† This address, and also that of the Dissenters, I shall insert in the APPENDIX, No. IX. that the abject spirit of the one may be compared with the liberal and manly spirit of the other.

fall under the suspicion of screening the criminals, and therefore of partaking in the guilt.

The clergy, if they had wished to wash their hands of this crime, and disclaim the conduct of those who call themselves *their friends*, should have been the first to reprobate their proceedings, and to preach moderation and peace. Instead of this they have been the first to calumniate us, and represent the conduct of the mob in the most favourable light. Since two meeting-houses were destroyed on pretence of supporting the *church*, the least that they could have done, and the most natural compensation for the time, would have been to allow the Dissenters the use of their churches, till the meeting-houses could have been rebuilt.

This would only have been doing, as a compensation for an injury committed by churchmen, what the Dissenters at Banbury are at this very time doing in favour of the church of England, while the parish church of that place is rebuilding, though they had no hand in pulling it down. There are several places in Germany in which the Catholics and Protestants constantly make use of the same place of public worship. Such an offer on the part of the clergy, or the bishop of the diocese, would have done them the greatest credit, and have contributed very much towards exculpating them from having any share in the outrage. But this natural and easy method, which would have cost them nothing, not having been done, they remain without that exculpation. The clergy also, and
other

other principal inhabitants of the town, if they had been properly sensible of the injury done to myself in particular, might have joined in inviting me back again, and doing every thing in their power to make my re-establishment safe and easy.

On the contrary, I am informed from various quarters, that the inveteracy against me through the town in general, owing to the most atrocious calumnies, and misrepresentations, is rather increased than diminished, and that my return would both be hazardous to myself, and augment their hostility*.

It is evident, therefore, that we have now nothing to expect either from the clergy or laity of the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, but must look to the general government of the country; and we hope it will be found that thence we do not look for justice, activity, or energy, in vain.

Had the bishop of the diocese sent a proper *pastoral letter* to the clergy of Birmingham, lamenting the effects of party spirit, and especially that any attempts should have been made to support a *christian church* by such unchristian means as had been employed on that pretence; had he advised an immediate reparation of the wrongs of the Dissenters, and the doing every thing that was in the power of the members of the church of England to restore

* In order to see the different spirit that actuates dissenting ministers, and the generality of the clergy, with respect to the late riots, I would refer my reader to Mr. Scholefield's truly christian *Discourse on loving our Enemies*, and his spirited and excellent *Preface* to it.

the peace of the town, the instigators of the riot would before this time have been made ashamed of their conduct, and greater harmony than ever might have taken place between the members of the established church and the Dissenters. But though many of his flock have behaved like wolves, their conduct has not been reproved by their pastor, at least in that public manner which the nature of the case required. Considering the part that many of the lower clergy have acted in this business, the eyes of the country are now upon the bishops; and their silence will be construed into approbation; especially since much of the bigotry of the present times is by many ascribed to their frequent and inflammatory charges against the Dissenters, and especially the Unitarians, not without plain allusions to myself in particular.

In the reigns of king William and queen Ann, the bigotry of the inferior clergy was constantly checked by the greater liberality of the bishops; the lower house of convocation being controlled by the upper house. But in this reign the high church spirit has descended from the superior to the inferior clergy.

If the spirit of persecution proceed as it has begun, unchecked by the superior clergy of the church of England, I shall not scruple to say of it, as of mystical Babylon in the Revelation (xviii. 4.) *Come out of her my people, lest ye be partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* But I hope, and I know, better things of many of them, and

and I have great expectations from their interference.

Of the two parties in whose names the outrages at Birmingham were committed, viz. *the church* and *the king*, the latter has, in a great measure, exculpated himself, by his proclamation to apprehend and punish the rioters. But the former, the boasted *ally* of the state (and which, like Cardinal Wolsey, always names herself before her king) has not hitherto done any thing in concurrence with her ally, but has taken another coadjutor. Henceforth, therefore, the cry should be, not *church and king*, but *church and mob*.

SECTION VI.

Of the principal Use of an established Religion.

I CANNOT help observing on this occasion, that if the state be at the expence of providing the country with *religion*, it should be chiefly for the benefit of those who stand in the most need of it, and who would not provide any for themselves. The *better sort* of people, as we call them, will behave orderly and peaceably, which is the great end of civil government, without it. But with us the lower classes of the community are nearly in the same condition as if there were no established religion at all. If the inefficacy of an established religion to correct the disorders of the lower orders of the people, as manifested in the riots at Birmingham,

mingham, does not open the eyes of this country to the true nature and use of church establishments, it will be difficult to say what will, and so great and serious a lesson will have been given us in vain.

In consequence of the too general neglect of the lower classes of people by the ministers of the established church, their profaneness, brutality, and licentiousness, exceed that of the same class of people in any other country whatever, civilized or uncivilized. For those whom we call *savages* have infinitely more regard to decency, equity, and civility, in their conduct, than the untaught vulgar with us. What these learn from a state of society are the vices to which it gives occasion, and they are such as have no place in what we call the *uncivilized* part of the world, because, in their circumstances, there is no temptation to them.

If therefore, there must be a *state religion*, and the object of this religion be not the emolument of the teachers of it, or the power of the governors in disposing of those emoluments, but to inspire the people with a sense of their obligations to God and man, the most express provision should be made for the instruction of the lower orders of the people, in preference to that of all others. The clergy should know them all, and instruct them all. But with us too little of this kind is done, nor does there appear much disposition towards it.

The greatest part of the real advantage which this country derives from the religion of the lower orders

orders of the people costs it nothing at all, being that which accrues to it from the labours of the Dissenters and Methodists, who have been the means of civilizing and christianizing some of those for whose instruction principally the established clergy are paid, but who are too generally neglected by them, and are as sheep without a shepherd. The country will sooner or later consider the *cui bono* of this establishment, as well as of every thing else in the system for which it furnishes the expence.

The only thing that has of late years been done in favour of this greatly neglected part of the community, is the institution of *Sunday Schools*, which was the happy thought of Mr. Raikes of Gloucester, a member of the church of England, and which was immediately patronized by the clergy, and the members of the church of England in general. But because many of the Dissenters took them up with more zeal than they, and made better provision for instructing and rewarding Sunday scholars (so that their schools came into greater repute than those of the establishment) several of the clergy have taken umbrage at them. Some of them have endeavoured to compel the Dissenters to drop, or reduce, their Sunday Schools, and others who pretend to more sagacity than the rest, now say that they never approved of the scheme, because they foresaw that it would be the means of adding to the number of the Dissenters, a thing which they evidently consider as a greater evil than that shameful ignorance and profligacy of the poor, which this
excellent

excellent scheme is calculated to remove. See Dr. Tatbam's Letters.

In this case it should be considered out of what class of the community the addition to the Dissenters is made. Is it not out of that which, previous to this measure, had no religion at all? The clergy in general are far from adopting this unchristian maxim, and in some places they act in concert with the Dissenters, in a scheme the object of which is common christianity, and common utility.

When an account shall be taken of the advantages and disadvantages of civil establishments of religion, every injury done by *persecution* should be placed on the *per contra* side. For the different sects of Dissenters in this country, where there is an establishment, and the different religious denominations in North America, where there is none, never molest one another, but live in good neighbourhood and friendship. It is when one sect enjoys temporal advantages from which the rest are excluded, that a bone of contention is thrown among them; and then the envy of the depressed party, but much more the jealousy and spirit of domination, the natural offspring of *power*, in the party that is favoured, may do infinite mischief. For the spirit of church establishments, which is ever jealous and vindictive, is not peculiar to *them*. It is the spirit not of religion in particular, but of all *monopolies*. Nor are the clergy so much to be complained of. Men in general are the same. They are *systems* and *institutions*, that corrupt mankind.

In all those who have possession of power, there too easily arises the idea, that what cannot be accomplished by *argument* in favour of their system, may be effected with much more ease and certainty by external *force*. Hence, instead of answering our books, the members of the church of England at Birmingham, have burned them, together with our houses and places of public worship. If such a proceeding as this either breaks the spirit, or lessens the number, of Dissenters, it will be the first experiment of the kind that has succeeded. But the heroic actors in this business probably never heard that any such experiment had ever been tried before.

I shall conclude this article with observing, that it is usual to praise every existing reign, as great and glorious, and to ascribe every thing that the age produces to the prince upon the throne. But whatever other advantages have accrued to this country during the present reign, I will venture to say that, if the despicable spirit of bigotry and intolerance continue to prevail, unchecked by government, as it has done of late years, it will (considering the increasing light of the age in every other country in Europe) be one of the most disgraceful in the annals of Britain. There was something plausible in the persecution of christians by heathens, and in that of Protestants by Catholics, because they introduced great innovations, and great and unknown consequences were dreaded from them. They were religions of yesterday
overturning

overturning establishments of the remotest antiquity. But the persecution of one sect of Protestants by another, all equally *novelties*, and very much resembling one another, is nothing better than the mutual persecution of the *Sonnites* and *Shiites* in Mahomedan countries, or than that of the *Littleendians* of Lilliput by the *Bigendians*.

A great number of the clergy, however, are men of other minds. They are sensible of the abuses of their system, and earnestly wish for a reform. They respect the Dissenters, and are always ready to act in concert with them, wherever humanity or common christianity is concerned. These are generally called *low churchmen*, while those of the *high church party*, which is certainly greatly increased of late years, are strenuous advocates for continuing every thing as it is, and opposing all *innovation*, that is, every *reform*. They hate, and they dread, all Dissenters, except the quietest among them, who neither speak nor write any thing on the subject of their dissent, and who, like all other Dissenters, generally pay them better, and more cheerfully, than their other parishioners. Such Dissenters as these they might not be very sorry to see increase.

SECTION VII.

Of the Importance of a good Police in a well constituted State.

WE may learn from the late riots in Birmingham, as well as from those in London, in 1780, the necessity of having a force always ready to repel an undisciplined mob. On either of these occasions, twenty men armed with muskets, and only a general knowledge of the use of them, would at any time have dispersed the rioters. And how easy would it be to have many times this small force in constant readiness in every town and parish in the kingdom, without having recourse to a *standing army*, at the command of the crown only, which is the bane of all free states. Let all the reputable inhabitants of any town, or parish, be provided with fire arms, and exercised in the use of them, and no riots would ever be attempted.

What objection any wise and just government can have to this measure, I do not see; and without a provision of this kind, we are disappointed with respect to the principal advantage that a state of society and government holds out to us, which is protection from lawless violence, and the benefit of a fair trial for any offences of which we are accused.

accused. While men offend against no law, they should enjoy the protection of the law, and if they do offend, they should be tried and punished according to law. This is the first rule in all civil society; and yet in this country there is at this moment a too general exultation, that this rule has been violated in the case of the Dissenters in general, and of myself in particular, though we have done no injury to society whatever.

It is something extraordinary that persons used to a state of law and government should not be struck with the impropriety of making a mob both the judges, and executioners, of law, and that in a state of intoxication, when they are not capable of hearing any reason. In the present case, on the simple assertion of some malicious person, that I drank *No church, no king*, and *The king's head in a charger*, at a place where I was not present, and that I was the author of a *band-bill* which I had barely heard of, I am instantly, without examination of myself, or my accuser, exposed to suffer infinitely more than I should have done if I had been actually guilty of all these offences, and the whole charge had been proved in a court of law. For *that* could only have amounted to *fine and imprisonment*. It would not have involved the innocent labours of my past life. The sentence of the law would not have been the burning of my house, without giving me an opportunity of removing any thing out of it, or the destruction of my library, apparatus, and manuscripts.

Supposing the Dissenters should have had recourse to similar methods of revenge, which would have been more justifiable, as not having been the *aggressors*, and have burned church for church, house for house, library for library, &c. &c. into what a state of anarchy, worse than civil war, would the whole country have been thrown. The worst that my enemies can say of me, and that without any truth, is that I wish to set up a republican form of government. But this is at least *some* form of government; whereas those who planned, and directed, the proceedings at Birmingham, went by no sort of government at all; having adopted the very measures which all governments whatever were intended to guard against*.

Since the Dissenters are clearly innocent of what has been so generally laid to their charge, and for which they have suffered so severely, we may apply

* Some, however, take it for granted, that by a republican form of government, is meant no government at all, but to leave all people at liberty to act as they please, from the impulse of the moment. Thus the Ghost in the poem from Chester is made to say,

“How couldst thou preach that mobs might rule.”

A writer in the Gentleman's Magazine for September, 1791, p. 191, whose signature is OEDIPUS, says of me, “His own engine *the mob*, which he vainly imagined he could wield with ability, and with which he has in the present instance threatened the establishment of his country, has at last recoiled upon him with ten-fold violence. That Dr. Priestley has done all in his power to stir up the people in opposition to government, is a fact easily proved.” That Mr. Nichols, a man who has some pretensions to literature, should suffer this publication, which goes into the hands of most men of letters, to be the hackneyed vehicle of such impudent and malicious falsehoods, against a person in my situation, will to many appear extraordinary. But he ranks with high churchmen, and on such, in the case of Dissenters, justice and humanity seem to have no claims.

to their case the proverb used on a similar occasion by our Saviour (who, however, was not punished without the form of *law*, and the authority of the chief magistrate) *If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry.* If the innocent suffer thus much, what have the guilty to expect?

It was a blind and furious zeal for *the law*, the established religion of the country, a religion appointed by God himself, and the lawless violences to which their zeal led those of the Jews who were termed *zealots*, that preceded, and brought on, the destruction of Jerusalem; and those zealots were not more blind and furious than the friends of the church of England at Birmingham, and in many other parts of this country. Let those of them who are able, read Josephus, and take warning.

The number of such desperate and profligate wretches in this country as were instigated to lawless havoc and plunder, on the pretence of supporting the church and state, at Birmingham, and who will be equally ready to plunder on any other pretence, almost exceeds belief, and we have more to dread from them than from all our other evils put together. Indeed, they all point to this.

Whenever the difficulties of this country shall increase, so that these people can neither be employed, nor fed (and from more causes than one we draw nearer to this situation every day) every great town in England, if no provision be made

against it, may be expected to exhibit such scenes as Birmingham has lately done, and as London did in the year 1780; when the labour of ages may be swept away in a day, and this whole country, at present the pride of the world, may become a scene of general desolation. It has within itself the ample seeds of such calamity, in the prodigious number of the ignorant, the profligate, and the profane part of the lower orders of the community, whom the impolicy of our *poor laws* chiefly, has rendered utterly averse to labour and economy, to a degree far below that of any of the brute creation. Our common soldiers are chiefly of this class, and cases may arise, in which little dependence can be placed upon *them*, for preserving the peace and good order of the kingdom.

The established clergy give little attention to the morals of this most depraved part of the community; nor indeed is it in their power to do much. But the case requires the immediate attention of government, if our statesmen mean to do any thing more than put off the evil day from their own times, contenting themselves with temporary expedients, instead of substantial remedies.

If our lives and properties are to be at the mercy of a mob, which may rise and commit its premeditated ravages, without giving us any warning; and if there be no redress but in a military force, and that frequently at a considerable distance; and if this redress depend on the arbitrary will of the crown;

crown; let any person say in what our condition differs from that of perfect *despotism*; our imperfect security from the greatest injuries arising not from *law*, and *regular government*, but from *arbitrary will*. It would be a government in the strictest sense of the word *military*, and much worse than that which is usually so called; because in it there is at least some known mode of proceeding.

Such, however, is the present situation of this country, that there appears to be no effectual remedy for this great evil, but in voluntary associations for self-defence; and this is little less than superadding a new government, at a great expence, to supply the defects of an old one, which is already the most expensive in the world. It is so far from being improper, or illegal, for men to defend themselves, and their property, from lawless violence, by any sufficient means, fire-arms not excepted, that it is highly commendable to do it. See Sir William Jones's excellent Tract on *The legal Method of suppressing Riots*.

In the riots at Birmingham relief was sent as soon as possible, the expedition of the troops was extraordinary; and thanks were certainly due to those who actually saved the town, and especially the Dissenters in it, from total destruction. But had government been remiss, or the troops tardy; nay, had the expresses been delayed, as they

might have been, by accident: and if, from any of these causes, the fury of the mob had continued unrestrained a single day longer (in which case it is the general opinion that the town would have been on fire) where could have been the remedy, when such a town as Birmingham, and the manufactures of it, had been lost to the kingdom? Should the safety of a wise nation depend upon resources so precarious as these?

Let those who are not displeased with mobs when they think that they only execute summary justice on those whom the laws cannot reach, consider how hazardous a weapon they wish to employ, and how difficult it is to direct it. None of those who promoted the riots in Birmingham had, I am persuaded, any intention that the mischief should have proceeded so far as it did; and I should not wonder if the time come when the same lawless rabble, who lately shouted *Church and king*, should take up the cry of *No church, no king*, or at least that of *No game laws, no tythes, no excise*. Nothing is wanting but an artful leader.

Who does not recollect how the tide of popular favour has turned both with respect to our present sovereign, and the present king of France. No princes ever came to their crowns with more general popularity. But in a few years the case was so much the reverse in this country, that the king

constantly

constantly went abroad, if not amidst the hisses (which was sometimes the case) yet with the most marked and disrespectful silence, of the people in general*. The case is now happily reversed, and the present reign is likely to close with as much popularity as it began.

Who was ever more idolized than the present king of France, and yet what was not thought, and openly said of him, on his late return to Paris? And he is now likely to be more, and more justly, popular than ever. Both these princes, however, are, no doubt, the very same that they ever were. The change has been in the people, and in their ideas of them.

The late king of France was almost idolized at the time of his illness at Rheims. Had he been literally the father of every family in the nation, they could not have appeared to feel more for him than they did. Yet though there was little change in his principles or conduct, into what universal contempt did he sink before he died. Wise men

* I never saw a greater croud on any occasion than on the king's once going through St. James's park to the house of Peers, at the beginning of the American war, and because one man, probably from the country, pulled off his hat as the coach passed close to him, he was very near being knocked down for it by those who were next to him. It was the constant custom for years to let the king's chair pass without any notice, at the same time that every person put off his hat in the most respectful manner to the queen. When, as by a kind of irresistible impulse, I was at one time going to pull off mine to the king, the person I was walking with, perceiving that I was putting up my hand for that purpose, checked me, by saying that if I did, I should certainly be insulted.

will reflect on these things, and the causes of them; and from the changes that have taken place, they will not be surprized at any others of the same kind, as great, and as sudden.

SECTION VIII.

The Impolicy of checking the natural Expression of Men's Sentiments.

SO many lessons as history holds out to us of the kind, I cannot help expressing some surprise, that the pretended friends of our government should endeavour to suppress the natural ebullition of men's minds by speaking, writing, or public entertainments. No attempts of this kind can prevent men's *thinking*. Nay, these measures have never failed to make men think the more, and the sooner to have recourse to other methods of expressing their sentiments, infinitely more hazardous to the public peace.

What did the late government of France gain by the most rigorous measures of this kind, restraining all liberty of the press, and preventing, as far as *power* could do it, all the usual modes of expressing men's sentiments? In these circumstances, *prohibited books* did infinitely more mischief,

as

as it would be called, than any that could have been published; and private conversation, in this state of restraint, did more mischief than any books whatever. For the Revolution, as is evident, found the whole nation, those who could not read, as well as those who could, fully ripe for the change; while to those who were unacquainted with the natural progress of things, there seemed to be an instantaneous, and almost miraculous, transition, from idolizing their kings, to a contempt and detestation of kingly government, till, on farther reflection, they acquiesced in the present medium.

On the other hand, Englishmen, being used to write and to speak freely, and to have convivial meetings whenever they please, are generally content with giving vent to their sentiments in these ways, and never think of any thing farther. But if this outlet to their natural feelings be shut, they will certainly find some other, much more alarming, than dinners, toasts, and songs. It may be like the stopping the mouth of a volcano, the consequence of which would be the convulsion of all the country. If there is to be a revolution in this country, similar to that which has taken place in France (though our situation is such as by no means to require it) attempts to deter men by illegal violence from doing what the law does not forbid, will, I am confident, bring it on in half the time. Men, who do not like to be insulted, will at length be prepared to resist violence by violence; and from such accidental and inconsiderate sparks as these,

these, a civil war may be lighted up, and consequences may follow which the wisest among us cannot foresee.

They who take any serious umbrage at such meetings as those for the celebration of the French Revolution, throw the greatest reflection on the present reign, and most endanger the present happy tranquility of it. For it is to represent it as no better than the reign of Tiberius, a reign of universal suspicion, and of real dangers arising from imaginary ones. That government must be conscious of its extreme weakness, or be actuated by the most wanton cruelty, that can seriously resent such trifling insults as these, admitting, what is by no means true, that they were *intended* for insults.

The wisest, and in all respects the best method, is to indulge men in the freest expression of their natural sentiments, and even to encourage the fullest discussion of all topics, of a civil as well as of a religious nature, in order that one opinion and one reason may combat another, and that all truth, religious, philosophical, or political, may prevail, and establish itself, without obstruction. By this gentle and generous proceeding, no convulsion will ever happen in any state. The public opinion will thus be formed gradually, and have its natural and easy operation, producing changes as they are wanted; and grievances will not be permitted to accumulate, till the mass shall be so great, as to force its way through all opposition.

This

This maxim is equally true with respect to the church, or the state. If the clergy made no opposition to the increasing light of the age, but would themselves speculate freely on every subject relating to their own situation, and that of the country, nothing would ever hurt any individual of them. Should the consequence of this free discussion, and gradual change in the public mind, be the abolition of tythes, they would not be losers by it; because, if they themselves should heartily concur in the measure, some better, and no less ample, provision would be made for them. Should they allow a revision of the public creeds, articles, and liturgy, the present subscription might be dropped, and any other alteration made, without affecting their revenues, or the general system.

Should the clergy proceed a step farther, and acknowledge that the seat of the bishops in the House of Lords (which has no other origin than the new antiquated feudal system) was unsuitable to their spiritual character; and of their own accord withdraw themselves from Parliament, it would be with a dignity which would establish them in the good-will of the people, and preserve their rank in other respects, for ages.

But by proceeding on their present plan of a dread of all *innovation*, and altering nothing, notwithstanding the increasing light of the age, they lead many persons to conclude, that they are determined to hear no reason, and that, from a regard
to

to their tempoarl honours and emoluments only, they wilfully shut their ears to the clearest voice of truth.

By this means the whole system of the civil establishment of christianity will be suspected to be irreconcilable to the cause of religious truth, and civil liberty; and on the first great change in the state of public affairs, there will be some hazard of the country rejecting it as a nuisance, without substituting any thing in its place.

It is easy to make similar remarks with respect to the system of civil government. A more equal representation of the commons in Parliament is most evidently wanted; and if this, and other necessary reforms, be long withheld, the whole system will be endangered, though it is not easy to foresee in what manner the danger will come, or how far the evil attending a sudden change of system, in a situation so critical and complicated as ours, will extend.

SECTION

SECTION IX.

Considerations relating to Persecution, and the Consequences of it.

MANY of the *friends of the church*, as they are called, freely indulge themselves in rejoicing at the calamities of the dissenting sufferers at Birmingham, without having any idea of their being actuated by a spirit of *persecution*. This spirit, it is something remarkable, all who have ever persecuted have disclaimed; thinking their conduct abundantly justified by the disposition, and behaviour, of the sufferers; and it has almost always been pretended, that these have been punished not for their *opinions*, but for *disturbing the state*.

This was constantly alleged by all the heathen persecutors. Though the Christians were the most innocent and peaceable of men, they were considered as enemies of the Roman government, and punished as for civil offences. The Catholics also, at the time of the reformation, treated *heresy* as a thing that was dangerous to the civil power, and thus were influenced by political, as well as religious considerations. Both Philip II. and Lewis XIV. thought Protestants to be *bad subjects*, whose aim it was to make disturbance in the state; and this is precisely the character under which the

the zealots of the church of England are continually exhibiting the Dissenters. Though it is unquestionable, that the Dissenters in the late reigns were the best friends of the family on the throne, and the clergy in general disaffected to it, wishing, and not very secretly, for the re-establishment of the Stuarts, they now have the assurance to charge *us* with disaffection. And with the idea, however absurd, that what they do is purely *defensive*, and merely to prevent injury to themselves (who they must know are placed far beyond the reach of our *power*, if it was our *wish*, to hurt them) many of them would without remorse be guilty of every outrage upon our property, and our persons too, that the heathens and Catholics ever gave into.

Our Saviour apprized his disciples that *they who killed them would think they did God service*. Paul thought that he did right in persecuting the christians, even unto death; and the bigoted Jews in general persecuted through *ignorance*. But were they, therefore, innocent? And did not the just judgments of God overtake that infatuated nation on this very account? There is a kind of ignorance that is highly criminal, arising not only from neglect of making enquiry, which itself arises from criminal prejudice, but from a secret malignity of temper, which conceals itself under the notion of zeal for religion.

That persons frequently mistake the real motives of their own conduct, and thereby form a
wrong

wrong judgment of their own characters, is notorious. What man ever thought himself to be covetous, though all the world saw him to be so in the extreme? Or what man, ever thought himself proud; and yet pride is certainly not banished from the world? Nay, did ever any man, except in reflecting on his conduct afterwards, think himself a bad husband, a bad father, or a bad master? And yet there certainly are such characters. Men always find excuses for their own conduct.

Can we wonder then, that no man ever thought himself to be a persecutor? And is it not, therefore, very possible, that the church of England may be in a high degree intolerant and persecuting, without acknowledging, or even seeing it. But the question is, whether, notwithstanding this good opinion of herself, she be not truly so, and whether she be not liable to the just judgments of God on that account. Let the members of this church examine themselves on this head; and for this purpose I shall take the liberty to furnish them with a few queries, arising from the present circumstances of things.

Did they not, previous to the riots in Birmingham, wish myself, and other opposers of the doctrine of the trinity, to be silenced by other means than by *argument*? Several of those who engaged in public controversy with me on this subject gave sufficient intimation of their wish for the interposition of the civil power, and I doubt not lamented that the circumstances of the times

H

were

were unfavourable to such a mode of silencing us. And what is persecution, but the application of *force* in the place of *argument*.

Did those who exclaimed the most against us so much as read our writings? It is well known that, when the question has been put to many of them, they have not only answered in the negative, but have even expressed a kind of horror at the proposal, and have strongly dissuaded others from reading. Now what is this but a proof of extreme *bigotry*? And is not bigotry the natural parent of intolerance and persecution?

Did not great numbers of the clergy express a real satisfaction in the riots, when they heard that the meeting-houses, and every thing belonging to *myself*, were destroyed; and would they have been sorry if I had perished too, manifestly illegal and unjust as this method of obtaining their end was? The clergyman who openly expressed the satisfaction he should have in burning me alive was, I am informed, one of the weaker of his brethern, but I doubt not, he expressed the real sentiments of many others*. Now every person who was not displeased with the act, is, in the eye of reason and of

* How far the ideas of some persons went on this occasion may be seen in the following paper written in a large print-hand, and found at Beaconsfield. "It is confidently reported from Birmingham and London, that should the Dissenters attempt any thing farther against the king, church, or state, they will provoke the true patriot-re-sentment, and nothing less will dispense or satisfy them, but the extirpation of the whole race of Dissenters from this kingdom, or total destruction to a man."

God,

God, an abettor of it, and a partaker of the guilt. I therefore leave it to the consciences of the clergy in general, and at least those who class with the high church party, whether this was not their case, and consequently whether they ought not to class with persecutors. Little do many of the clergy know *what spirit they are really of*, or to what degrees of violence their principles, or tempers, would lead them. It is not necessary, in order to be persecutors, that they themselves commit acts of violence. They should be sorry for them, and endeavour to prevent them.

Persecution assumes a variety of forms, and is generally progressive. The edict of Nantes was not revoked without many previous steps, and the clergy and the court of France shewed their ill-will to the Protestants by thwarting them, and harrassing them, in many indirect ways, before they threw off the mask, and persecuted openly. Still, they did not allow themselves to be *persecutors*, because protestantism was always tolerated in France, though on hard conditions, and Protestants were never by law excluded from civil employments, at the appointment of the crown, as Dissenters are in this country. But persecution takes one form in one place, and a different one in another.

In the unquestionably persecuting reigns of Elizabeth, and the Stuarts, the Puritans were not put to death. But they were so much harrassed in

various ways, that they were glad to take refuge in the then inhospitable climes of America, a country worse than desert. But they preferred the neighbourhood of the natural savages of America, to that of the artificial, but more cruel, savages of Europe. By perseverance they conquered all their difficulties, and when the hand of oppression was stretched towards them in our own times, they nobly resisted, and conquered again in another way. The liberty of America was the proper parent of that of France. And thus, in the wonderful order of Divine Providence, has oppression, civil and religious, been the cause of a greater extension of liberty than the world had ever known before.

A less degree of persecution will now induce the descendants of those Puritans to join their brethren in America, or the common sons of liberty nearer home; either of whom would receive them with open arms. Let the governors of the country attend to this consideration, before the evil be so far advanced, as that nothing can prevent its farther progress. And rich as this country is boasted to be, in resources of all kinds, it is not, I apprehend, in so very flourishing a condition, as to venture upon such an experiment as that of the expulsion of the Dissenters from England (which would have much more serious consequences than that of the Morisco's from Spain) without greater risk than its most sanguine friends would chuse. The American war had a slighter commencement than
the

the riots in Birmingham, and the animosity against the Dissenters is now more general, and more inveterate, than it ever was against the Americans. *Verbum Sapienti. Principiis obsta.*

I well know that our enemies would rejoice in our emigration*, without ever reflecting that preceding emigrations on similar accounts have never diminished the source from which they sprung. Though the revocation of the edict of Nantes drove immense numbers of Protestants from France, the number within the country was not lessened. To extirpate sectaries is not so easy a business as to extirpate offensive plants, or animals; because a man who is not a sectary to-day may become one to-morrow. With care, the whole species of ashes, or elms, for example, might be extirpated; especially in an island. But it would soon be found to be labour in vain, if oaks, beeches, and all other trees, should be converted into ashes or elms. In fact, to extirpate Unitarians, may come to be the same thing as to extirpate the human race.

A trinitarian, in consequence of reading and thinking, may become an unitarian, as was the case with myself. It is possible that even a bishop, and that bishop he who now occupies the see of St. David's, may become an unitarian. For though he some time ago declared that he had not read my

* This appears from several publications of the high church party since the riots.

History of early Opinions concerning Christ, he still may read it, and may be convinced by it. It is also within the sphere of *possibility*, that an unitarian bishop may, as he ought to do, declare himself one, and become a Dissenter. The same may be the case with those of the learned laity who have written in defence of the present church establishment*; and the conversion of such men as these may soon draw others after them.

To those who are at all acquainted with history, I need not observe that the persecution of the Protestants in France proved highly injurious to that kingdom. Men of property and of enterprise were the first to emigrate, and they soon drew others after them, and in a few years formed establishments in foreign countries, which rivalled, and afterwards eclipsed those which they had left.

Birmingham will not forget how much it owes to the ingenuity and spirit of one man, and that man a Dissenter, the father of one of those whose property has been so wantonly destroyed. The difference between Birmingham and the neighbouring towns is almost entirely owing to the spirited example of the late Mr. Taylor. Had he been

* This may be the case with Mr. Burke himself. He is not destitute of candour, any more than of good sense, and therefore may come to see, and acknowledge, that *one* cannot be *three*, or *three*, *one*, which is our great argument; and though it may be too much to expect of him to read my *History of early Opinions*, or my *Defences of Unitarianism*, he may read my *Appeal to the serious Professors of Christianity*, or my *General View of Arguments against the Divinity or Pre-existence of Christ*, the perusal of which would not take an hour.

treated as his son has been, and carried his enterprising spirit into France, some town in that country might have been what Birmingham now is.

I shall just mention three other men now living, and all of them Dissenters, whose spirit has so much improved, that they may be almost said to have *created*, their several manufactures, from which this country already derives the greatest honour and advantage, Mr. Wedgwood, Mr. Wilkinson, and Mr. Parker. Such men as these are the *makers of countries*; and yet such men as these, if not these men themselves, would the mad bigotry of this country exult in seeing depart for France, America, or Ireland; and many would think themselves happy in being quit of them. But what would their posterity say, or perhaps themselves, a few years hence?

The French want nothing but the example of the English method, and spirit, in trade, to rival us in all respects. They are not inferior in ingenuity, or industry; and seeing the wonderful effects of large capitals employed in manufactures and commerce, and especially the ability which it affords of giving credit, they will from this time employ the money they get in trade to better purposes than the purchase of places, and titles. Having no *court* to look up to, and depend upon, they will immediately adopt our maxims, and the removal of a few English manufacturers and merchants may instantly de-

cide the difference in their favour. And what a figure will this country then make, with its encreasing debts, and enormously expensive government, without any superiority with respect to manufactures and commerce? Will pulling down dissenting meeting-houses, and dwelling-houses, with the destruction of libraries, and philosophical instruments, and drinking damnation to Presbyterians, restore the balance in favour of England? This conduct has already, in the eyes of all Europe, covered the country with shame, and may be followed by ruin; and then repentance, which has not come yet, will come too late.

Considering the great number of Dissenters in all the trading towns of the kingdom, and the number of wealthy families who are continually going from the Dissenters into the church, it may not much exceed the truth, if we suppose that one half of the wealth of the nation has been the acquisition of Dissenters. It is the opinion of many, that envy of the prosperity of Dissenters was one considerable stimulus to the mischief that was done to them at Birmingham. But the wanton destruction of wealth acquired by honest industry, is not the way to make a nation flourish, and enable it to bear its burdens.

The only effectual remedy of the evil, which has shewn itself at Birmingham, and which threatens the kingdom at large, is such as the spirit of the clergy at present will very ill brook. It is nothing less

less than making religious *toleration complete*, which it can never be said to be, so long as any man shall be a sufferer in his civil capacity on account of his religion. And since exclusion from places of trust and emolument is no less a punishment than fine and imprisonment, and is a state of ignominy, which may be felt by some in the most sensible manner; to make the toleration complete, the *Test Act* must be repealed, as well as all other penal statutes in matters of religion. All this might be done, and yet the church be left in the full possession of her creeds, her subscriptions, her revenues, the seat of the bishops in Parliament, and even the public universities, with every thing else that can be deemed necessary to the most complete *establishment* of any system of religion.

But the church of England is not content to enjoy her proper prerogatives. She is, like most other establishments, intolerant, and will not be satisfied without the degradation at least, of those who dissent from her. Dr. Johnson said, "the Dissenters must not be admitted into the universities, because that would be to furnish their enemies with arms." But without having access to the universities, the church of England has found that we are in no want of such arms, offensive or defensive; and this jealous exclusion of us from the universities, and from other advantages which ought to be common to all citizens, is the circumstance which gives our weapons their keenest edge.

This

This completion of the toleration must, in the present state of this country, be the work of administration, checking the blind and impolitic bigotry of the clergy, which it is in the power of our governors to do effectually, whenever they please. But if they go on to thwart the Dissenters, and support the high churchmen against them, the spirit of party will necessarily increase, till persecution, legal or illegal, will become extreme. However, any farther application to Parliament for this purpose by the Dissenters would only inflame matters more than ever; as the clergy are far from shewing any disposition to relent in our favour; and without the least regard to the political interest of the country, many of them would proceed to any extremity. The advantage which the country derives from this church in *spirituals* ought to be very great, to counterbalance what it may suffer by it in *temporals*.

If the state of the church of England with respect to the whole of the British empire be considered by the members of it, they will see the greatest reason for moderation, and how impolitic it must be to indulge that spirit of persecution which has broke out at Birmingham, and has manifested itself in many other places. The British empire, besides England, embraces Scotland, Ireland, and Canada, in all which countries but a small number of the inhabitants are of her communion. Were these added to the Dissenters in England, and joined to those within the pale of the church who disapprove of its system, but have not
the

the courage to break their connection with it, there is little doubt, but they would make a majority of the subjects.

Besides, all who are not Dissenters must not, therefore, be numbered among the proper adherents of the established church. The great mass of them have no preference for it, but because it is the established church; and no observing person can doubt, but that if Mr. Lindsey's Unitarian Liturgy should be patronized by government, and a few of the more zealous of the clergy should not found the alarm, not one person in a hundred would make any complaint of it.

Still less can those who attend no public worship at all, who abound in the highest and lowest classes of the community, be fairly reckoned to belong to any church; and in all large manufacturing and commercial towns, in which consist the great resources of the nation, they who attend public worship of any kind bear but a small proportion to the rest. In Birmingham, at least, sixty thousand out of seventy are of this class; and of the remainder more persons attend public worship *out* of the parish churches than *in* them. In many parts of South Wales, and especially in the diocese of St. David's, I am informed that the parish churches are almost deserted, while the meeting-houses are numerous and full.

In fact, therefore, the true interest of the church of England, in the whole empire, is not great. It has

has but little hold on the minds of the people ; and is supported by other means than a cordial approbation of it, and attachment to it. Her dependance is not upon *herself*, but upon the mere will and power of the crown, which may change to-morrow, It, therefore, certainly does not become her to be insolent.

In this state of things, also, it is certainly the best policy in the crown to favour toleration, rather than persecution, and to convince every part of the empire, divided as the inhabitants of it are with respect to religion, that no difference of *this* kind will have any influence in *civil matters*. But at present, this country, which used to prize herself, and with reason, on its pre-eminence with respect to *liberty*, is far behind many other nations of Europe, to say nothing of America, and discovers a disposition to recede, rather than to advance, with respect to liberty, civil or religious.

SECTION

SECTION X.

The Conclusion, containing Reflections on the Power of Religion in general.

I SHALL close these Reflections with some relating to *religion* properly so called, as it has its seat in the mind, and influences the temper and conduct; and with these I particularly wish to impress my christian readers. Other persons do not need to proceed any farther, as what follows will to them be like something in an unknown tongue.

Having had a religious education, and originally a delicate constitution, I had from my early years a thoughtful and serious turn of mind. I have also ever been particularly attentive to histories of persecution, and the state of men's minds in those trying circumstances. This will appear from my publications. Several of my printed *Discourses* relate to this subject, much of my *Church History* (much more than is usual in works of that extent) is appropriated to narratives of that kind, and I made a separate re-publication, with a large Preface, of *An Account of the Sufferings of two eminent French Protestants, Monsieur Marolles and L  wis le Fevre.*

Having myself experienced something that may be called *persecution*, on account of the freedom of my

my religious principles, in my first settlement, and having since that time had much experience in religious controversy, mere *reproach*, however atrocious, never affected me much; much less I believe, than it does most other persons; and of late years, I can truly say that it is as nearly as possible a matter of perfect indifference to me, from whatever quarter it has come. Of sufferings of this kind it is probable that few men have ever had a greater share, almost every possible kind of evil having been *said of me*, though *falsely*. But the reproach of enemies has been more than compensated by the warm approbation and attachment of friends, of which also I have had my full share, enough to encourage any man to persevere in well doing, and even to bear any sufferings on that account.

But though I had read and reflected much on the feelings of christians in a state of persecution, and never doubted but that, in ordinary cases, their joys far exceeded their sorrows, I could not *know* that they did so to the *degree* in which I can truly, and I hope without much vanity (for in this I mean nothing but the instruction and encouragement of my readers) say that I have lately found it. It is only in trying situations that the full force of religious principle is felt, and that its real energy can show itself. And firmly believing, from the doctrine of *philosophical necessity*, that the hand of God is in all events, that in all cases men are only his instruments; that under his sure guidance all *evil* will terminate in *good*, and that nothing so effectually

tually promotes any good cause, by drawing men's attention to it, as the persecution of its advocates, all that I have suffered, and all that I can suffer, has, in many seasons of the calmest reflection upon it, appeared as *nothing, and less than nothing.*

I consider this persecution (for so I shall call it, though my enemies will, of course, consider it as the punishment of my evil deeds, and even much less than I deserve) let it be carried to what extent it will, as a certain prognostic of the prevalence of every great truth for which I have contended; and this prospect, together with the idea of my being an instrument in the hand of providence of promoting the spread of important truth, by *suffering* as well as by *acting*, has given me at times such exalted feelings of devotion (mixed, as sentiments of devotion ever will be, with the purest good-will towards all men, my bitterest enemies not excepted) as I had but an imperfect idea of before. If the future peace of the country, and the safety of my friends did not require it, I would not have a single sacrifice made to public justice. Both the instigators of the late violences, and their blind agents in them, should go without any other punishment, than what, if they ever come to a just sense of things, they will sufficiently inflict upon themselves.

Admitting that our persecutors really imagined that they were doing right, and promoting the cause of truth, in their late outrages, yet the feelings of the man who *does* an injury, with whatever view,

view, cannot be without a mixture of malevolence, in consequence of his rejoicing in that injury; a sentiment unworthy of a christian, and by which he will feel his mind debased. Whereas the sentiments of the purest benevolence easily mix with those of devotion in the mind of the man who unjustly *suffers* the injury, and who is satisfied that he is promoting the cause of truth, and consequently the best interests of mankind, by his sufferings. When, since my late disaster, I have given scope to such reflections as these, I have had sensations of joy and exultation which I should in vain attempt to describe; and in general they have immediately succeeded the most lively sense that I ever had of the injury done me.

What I have suffered in my person is in a manner nothing, and with respect to all the common wants of nature, I have had such resources in my friends, and in those whom I did not before know to be my friends, as few persons in my situation could have found. But corporeal sufferings are not those which give men the greatest anguish. Mental uneasiness is much more dreadful than bodily pain; and the despondency of some friends, the sufferings to which others of them may be exposed, and the marks of prejudice in some whom I had not considered as enemies, have sometimes given me feelings peculiarly unpleasant. Also, the idea of my not being able, at my time of life, to replace my papers, library, and apparatus; the interruption of all my pursuits, and the uncertainty of my future prospects,

prospects, cannot but some times be painful to me. But notwithstanding this, when I have attended to the considerations before-mentioned, I have even been able to rejoice that I had so much to lose; since without some sacrifice of this nature, I should not, in reality, have sustained any loss at all, and consequently should have had nothing to boast of. This, I own, is a sentiment that is not of the most exalted nature, but I hope it is innocent; and as part of my *real feelings*, not improper to be mentioned, among my other sources of consolation.

So fully am I persuaded that more good than evil will result from what has happened to me, that, were it in my power, I would not be restored to my former situation. Had the late events not happened, I should, of course, have wished, and prayed, for continuing as I was. For no man, I believe, ever thought himself more happily situated than I did. But Providence having now declared itself, I acquiesce, and even rejoice in the decision.

As to the theological works which I had in view, one of which was to trace the origin, and ascertain the nature, of *Ancient Idolatry*, in order to demonstrate the value of revelation, another to continue my *Church History*, to the present times; a third to publish my *Notes and a Paraphrase on the New Testament*, and a fourth, to complete what I had undertaken of the *New Translation of the Scriptures*, I conclude, either that these works were not wanted, or that they will be better done by other hands.

If life, and the proper means, be continued to me, I shall resume, at least, some of them, as well as my philosophical experiments; and if not, I shall console myself with this verse of Milton;

“They also serve, who only stand and wait.”

I am ready and willing to labour, and to the utmost of my ability, whenever my task shall be given me.

I hope also that I shall not be much condemned for deriving some consolation from the thought, that though my library and apparatus be destroyed, I made some considerable use of them while I had them, and therefore that I have not lived in vain. Of this consolation my enemies cannot deprive me; nor, if my life be continued, and my affairs be in any measure re-established, will any thing that I have yet suffered, damp my ardour in fresh pursuits; and having the advantage of years and experience, I may yet live to serve, not my country in particular, but mankind, and the world, of which I am now become more a citizen at large.

As to continuance of life, I was never very anxious about it. My writings shew that I do not consider *death* in itself as any great evil; and a violent death, which is all that men can inflict, is not, in general, so much to be dreaded as many diseases. Persecution is not to be courted by any christian. Death is never to be sought, but to be avoided; and no man can tell how he shall behave in any very new and trying situation. But I trust that the
same

same principles which have supported me hitherto will carry me through any trials that may yet remain for me.

I have often amused myself, and my friends, with recounting my several migrations, which, though never of my own seeking, have been more numerous than those of any of my acquaintance; when I always said that, having now obtained a happier situation in all respects, than I ever had before, I hoped I should never remove any more, and that I did not even wish to be, in any respect, happier than I was, in this world. In every change of situation, I used to say, the difficulty of my removing had been increased by the accumulation of my books and philosophical instruments; but that, at Birmingham, my library and apparatus were become so considerable, that it was absolutely impossible for me ever to remove to any other place. But now I am light enough, and can move with more ease than ever, ready, at a moment's warning, to go wherever it shall please divine providence to call me.

In general, the mind of man soon recovers its usual level, whatever it has been; scenes of prosperity or adversity only making a temporary impression upon it. Since, therefore, I have hitherto enjoyed a good share of uniform chearful spirits, without being subject to the extremes of elevation or depression, I have little doubt but that the same

happy state of mind will accompany me through whatever may yet remain of life.

Moreover, the same good providence which has accompanied *me*, will, I doubt not, accompany my children, who, being educated in good principles, will, I trust, have no less ardour of mind than I have had in every laudable pursuit that shall be within their reach. In this case I shall not be sorry to have been their parent, though they should be exposed to greater sufferings than I have been called to endure, in an equally good cause; and they will not be ashamed of their father, who has set them the example of it. Lastly, having acted a worthy and generous part in life, in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, I shall hope to meet them, and my other christian friends, in a better world, where we shall have nothing to fear from open violence, any more than from secret theft.

STRICTURES

In general, the mind of man soon recovers its usual level, whatever it has been; scenes of privation or adversity only making a temporary impression upon it. Since, therefore, I have hitherto enjoyed a good share of uniform cheerful spirits, without being subject to the extremes of elevation or depression, I have little doubt but that the same happy

STRICTURES ON A PAMPHLET

INTITLED,

Thoughts on the late Riot at Birmingham.

[Printed for John Sewell, Cornhill.]

SINCE the preceding *Appeal* was sent to the press, there has appeared a pamphlet intitled, *Thoughts on the late Riot at Birmingham*, written evidently by a high churchman (though in an *Advertisement* prefixed to it, he says he has “no party views, or intolerant spirit”) which abundantly justifies all that I have advanced concerning persons of that description. It is, in fact, nothing less than a declaration of war against all Dissenters, who shall presume to write any thing against the established church, threatening us with utter destruction. With us writing is turbulence, and such turbulence as will authorise open hostility of every kind. Such is the unavoidable inference from the following passage, p. 52.

“It is not too late for the Dissenters to recover the character of peaceable citizens, which they have lost by their late political interference. It was thought that many of them sinned against the peace of the public through inadvertency, and that

“ they only wanted some instructive *fact* to convince
 “ them of the tendency of what they were about,
 “ and to incline them to shew themselves the harm-
 “ less professors of a peaceful religion. Such a
 “ fact has happened, and the nation is waiting to
 “ see what effect it will have on them. If it is such
 “ as to shew that they have erred through want of
 “ consideration, an act of oblivion is ready to be
 “ passed on all their past misconduct. But if
 “ the same restless and turbulent spirit is still seen
 “ working among them, farewell candour, forbear-
 “ ance, and concord. There will be an extinction
 “ of all the charities that christianity inculcates be-
 “ tween the different persuasions, and hostilities will
 “ commence, that will probably never end till the
 “ one has effected the destruction of the other.”

What could Dominic himself have said more to
 his purpose, at the head of his crusaders? And what
 have we done more than the persecuted Albigenes
 did to provoke this violence? What have we done
 more than the primitive christians, or than the re-
 formers from popery did, in their time, that is,
 write in defence of our principles, and with a view
 to this, expose those of our adversaries, and al-
 most universally when they were the aggressors, and
 we were treated in the most insulting manner? For
this all candour is professedly abandoned, and de-
 struction threatened,

At length, then, we are come to an issue. And
 since with us resistance would be in vain, and in
 our

Thoughts on the Riot at Birmingham. 119

our opinion unchristian, we must bear all the malice of our enemies, or abandon the country. For we shall never abandon the defence of our principles as we have hitherto done, that is, by *writing*.

According to this writer, Dissenters must neither write about *religion*, nor *politics*. "As to the improvement of the constitution," he says, p. 49, "leave it to other hands." *This*, then, is a thing that we have no interest in. Consequently, we are already to be considered as no better than *aliens*, which is another reason why we should go to some country, where we may be treated as *citizens*.

Inconsistently enough, however, with the declaration of hostility quoted above, this writer says, p. 22, "The unitarian Dissenters are not yet of sufficient consequence to give any apprehensions." Why then all this rage, and bustle? Is the British lion so tormented with a fly? Have the high church people burned our meeting-houses and dwelling-houses, with every thing belonging to us, without the excuse of having something to *fear* from us? What then would they do if we gave them real cause of fear?

In the opinion of this writer, and all of his party, it was I who was the proper cause of the riot. and of all the mischief that was occasioned by it. "'Tis you," says he, p. 16, in his sarcastic way, "meek divine, peaceable philosopher, that did, in fact, set the populace afloat, and bring it down

“ upon a crowded town, like a destructive engine,
 “ that threatened general devastation. In vain,
 “ therefore, you seek to shift off the blame of this
 “ event from yourself, by endeavouring to fix it on
 “ others. The country considers *you* as the prin-
 “ cipal cause of the mischief, and the utmost that
 “ candour itself can say in your behalf is, that per-
 “ haps you did not intend the consequences, and
 “ are, independent of the losses you have sustained,
 “ sincerely sorry that they happened.”

From reading this, any stranger would natu-
 rally conclude, that it was I that raised the rioters,
 and headed them, but that afterwards they turned
 upon myself; and not that they were raised and in-
 stigated by my enemies, and that I was their first
 victim. On the idea, however, that I was the
 aggressor in this business, and taking it for granted,
 that I must see it in the same light with himself, he
 is surprized, p. 3, 17, to find nothing of *penitence* in
 my *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. But
 what have I to repent of? Is it my writings, in
 defence of truth and liberty? I am so far from
 repenting, that I glory in them, and in the same
 circumstances, I would have done the same again;
 and while I am capable of writing at all, I shall
 continue to write in the same manner, as opportu-
 nity offers. With respect to the riot, if I repent at
 all, it must be for the crimes of others. But though
 I cannot repent of them, I can truly say I am deeply
 concerned for them, and desirous that those who are
 guilty may repent. As things are, it is enough for
 me,

Thoughts on the Riot at Birmingham. 121

me, as a christian, to forgive those who have offended me, whenever *they* repent. More than this is not required of any man. Let those, then, who have burned my house, or have instigated others to burn it, do their duty, and I shall be ready to do mine.

This writer himself, this abettor of the burning of houses, libraries, and philosophical instruments, as an answer to *arguments*, only pretends to find my instruments of destruction in my writings. "Curiosity," he says, p. 16, "would prompt the people to read for themselves" (I only wish they were disposed to do so, especially at Birmingham) "where a man that was distinguished by such sentiments" (whatever, then, it was that was dangerous about me, they were but *sentiments*) "was an inhabitant. They opened one of his books, and there found that the man who had quietly enjoyed the exercise of his religion threatened the destruction of theirs." But did not I allow to others the same liberty that I took myself; and how did I threaten others? Not as they had threatened me, but only by *writing*.

In the same manner, in vindication of the justice of his charge against me as the proper author of all the mischief, he says, p. 17, "I call the whole nation to witness." Now what can the whole nation witness besides my writings, which are open to them all, and which I sincerely wish they would all read?*

* He likewise says, p. 17, that this charge against me can be "substantiated by producing the papers of the offender." If by *papers* be

That the whole of the *turbulence* this writer ascribes to me consists in nothing but my *writings*, is farther evident from his censure of my treatment of civil establishments of christianity in my *Letter to Mr. Burke*, in which, replying to an orator, who had not been sparing of his metaphors on the other side, I had made use of some which appeared to me to be applicable on mine, comparing those establishments, which were unknown in the primitive and sounder ages of the church, but were introduced in a late and more corrupt state, to a *fungus*, &c. "How remote," says he, p. 18, "is this from the language of a peaceable man." But, surely, it is not more remote from peace, than the burning of a house is from the answering of an argument. However, it is evident that, in this writer's idea, I cannot write at all, at least to any purpose, and employ either *reason* or *imagination*, without *breaking the peace*, and incurring the penalties annexed to that offence. I should have been happy, however, if my conduct had been considered in that light, and my enemies had contented themselves with prosecuting me in any legal method for breaking the peace. It would have been a curious trial; and would not, I presume, have ended as did the riots at Birmingham.

he meant *manuscript papers*, found in my library, when the rioters plundered it, of which this writer seems to have had the inspection, let them be produced. I have a perfect consciousness that there exists nothing of my writing, found either there, or in any other place, that can furnish just matter of crimination against me, though, as was the case with the immortal Algernon Sydney, papers so found should be admitted as legal evidence. I will not, however, answer for papers that may have been written by others in order to be found in my library, any more than for the *forged letter* that was read to the mob, to instigate them to do the mischief.

As

As a farther reason why I should not have written any thing against the church (which, it seems, does not like to be molested) he alleges my *not being of it*. "This pacific divine, and philosopher," he says, p. 6, "meddles with the concerns of a society to which he does not belong." But do the clergy govern themselves by the same maxim? Have they never voluntarily attacked the Dissenters? Did Mr. Madan get himself admitted into any of our societies before he wrote against us? Was not he, then, guilty of meddling with the concerns of a society to which *he* did not belong, even more than myself, as he was the aggressor in the controversy. But the maxim itself is absurd. It becomes every man to defend truth, and attack error, wherever he finds it. Every man is of the society of mankind, and should not see his brethern go astray, or in any respect injure themselves, without endeavouring to serve them. Did not the primitive christians meddle with the affairs of the heathens, and the Protestants with those of the Catholics, though they did not belong to their societies? And did they not meddle with them in the same manner in which I have meddled with the church of England, viz. by speaking and writing: and many of them wrote in a much more irritating manner than I have ever done, and were universally admired for it.

Dissenters, however, have just cause of meddling with the church of England, so long as it is a *national church*, and they, as well as the rest of
the

the community, contribute towards the maintenance of it. For every man is concerned to see that he has the value of that for which he gives his money. The Dissenters are much more a society with which the members of the church of England have no business to meddle, as they do not contribute to the support of our worship. According to this writer, Dissenters have nothing to do with either the *church* or the *state*, but must be passive lookers on in every thing; patiently bearing every burden that is laid upon them.

From the whole of this performance, which, whether coming from any authority or not, evidently speaks the language of all the high church party, it is evident that we are to receive blows for words, and fire and sword for argument. Let them then go to their purpose, and proceed as they have begun, viz. to burn our houses and meeting-houses, and ourselves too, if they can find us in them; for that was their intention at Birmingham. We also shall defend ourselves as we have hitherto done, i. e. with more writing, and more arguments. All men, and all animals, naturally have recourse to such weapons as they find themselves furnished with, and are most expert in the use of; and insignificant as ours may appear, in comparison with theirs, they will be found more effectual. We will say as the noble Florentine said to the French king and his officers, "Do you sound your trumpets, and we will ring our bells."

This

This writer says, p. 12, that "as a philosopher
" I know something of human nature, and how
" irritable men are on the subject of their national
" religion;" and p. 51, that my "political ani-
" madversions did not act merely on the under-
" standings of men, but that they took hold of their
" passions." This, indeed, we have found to our
cost. But it is likewise well known that passion
predominates most where there is the greatest de-
ficiency of reason. The primitive christians also,
and the first Protestants, found that their adversaries
had passions, which they were always ready to op-
pose to the dictates of reason; and that, having as
little to say for themselves, they were as irritable as
the high church party at Birmingham. But this
circumstance was no sufficient motive with the pri-
mitive christians, or the Protestants, for silence,
nor will it be any with us; and if this writer, or
his friends, imagine that the riots in Birmingham
will silence us, and produce no writing, he will be
greatly mistaken indeed. I foresee a deluge of
pamphlets on the occasion, and if he had wished
that there should be no writing on our side, he
should not have published on his.

If this writer be surprized at finding nothing
penitential in my Letter to the Inhabitants of Bir-
mingham, others, will be as much surprized on
finding nothing of *commiseration* in his pamphlet,
except for the wretches whom he expected would
be executed for what they did in the business. Of

this

this he has drawn an affecting picture indeed, as of the sufferings of so many martyrs to the church, and to religion. "This riot," he says, p. 3, "will be followed with the sacrifice of many lives on the altar of public justice. Disconsolate women are soon to take their last embrace of their husbands, children to shriek at the sight of their fathers suspended before their own doors, and heart-broken parents to follow their sons to the fatal tree, some of whom, had they not been put in motion by the ferment his writings have contributed to raise, had never disturbed the peace of society. Had there been any sympathy in the heart that dictated the letter, on the events that must draw such calamities after them, there had surely been one line expressive of such a sensation. Let the reader find it, if he can." And let the reader look through this whole pamphlet, and find, if he can, any thing like such a fellow-feeling for the innocent sufferers, as he here expresses for the wicked authors of their sufferings. In a note, however, on this passage (which I suppose he thought too eloquently written to be lost) the author says, he is happy "to find that his ideas were not fully justified by the issue of the late assizes held at Warwick." Indeed, the incomparable behaviour of the magistrates and of the jury, and the proper representations made to the king, have happily saved this writer and his friends much of the pain which they expected from the cruel and unmerited sufferings of their fellow churchmen. Had our sufferings been

Thoughts on the Riot at Birmingham. 127

been ten times greater than they have been, so much greater would have been their pious exultation over us.

I do not undertake to animadvert upon every thing that deserves animadversion in this pamphlet, but I cannot conclude these strictures without observing that, as a compliment to the church of England, against which Dissenters must not write, the author says, p. 11, "lays it any restraint on the "spirit of enquiry, and how then is it hostile to "the clearest truth?" Is then subscription to the thirty-nine articles at an age in which it is impossible for persons to have studied them, no restraint on the spirit of enquiry? And is not every restraint on the spirit of enquiry necessarily hostile to truth? But no man can see the darkest spot on his own forehead. Otherwise this writer could not but have been sensible of this, and many other most glaring absurdities in his intemperate publication.

APPENDIX.

been ten times greater than they have been, to much greater would have been their gross crimes than over us.

I do not undertake to animadvert upon every thing that deserves animadversion in this pamphlet, but I cannot conclude these strictures without observing that as a compliment to the church of England, against which Dissenters must not write, the author says p. 17, "I say it any restraint on the spirit of enquiry, and how then is it hostile to the clearest truth?" Is then subscription to the thirty-nine articles at an age in which it is impossible for persons to have studied them, no restraint on the spirit of enquiry? And is not every restraint on the spirit of enquiry necessarily hostile to truth? But no man can see the darkness spot on his own forehead. Obtruding this writer could not but have been sensible of this, and many other most glaring absurdities in his intemperate publication.

7 DE 61

APPENDIX

APPENDIX.

N^o I.

Copy of a Hand-bill privately circulated in Birmingham, a few Days before the Riots.

MY COUNTRYMEN,

THE second year of Gallic liberty is nearly expired. At the commencement of the third, on the 14th of this month, it is devoutly to be wished, that every enemy to civil and religious despotism would give his sanction to the *majestic common cause*, by a public celebration of the anniversary. Remember that on the 14th of July the Bastille, that "High Altar and Castle of Despotism" fell. Remember the enthusiasm *peculiar* to the cause of Liberty, with which it was attacked. Remember that generous humanity that taught the oppressed, groaning under the weight of insulted rights, to save the lives of oppressors! Extinguish the mean prejudices of nations; and let your numbers be collected, and sent as a free-will offering to the National Assembly.

But is it possible to forget that your own Parliament is venal? Your Minister hypocritical? Your Clergy legal oppressors? The reigning Family extravagant? The Crown of a certain great Personage becoming every day too

weighty for the head that wears it? Too weighty for the people who *gave* it? Your taxes partial and excessive? Your representation a cruel *insult* upon the sacred rights of property, religion, and freedom?

But on the 14th of this month, prove to the political sycophants of the day, that You reverence the Olive Branch; that You *will* sacrifice to public tranquility, till the majority *shall* exclaim, *The Peace of Slavery is worse than the War of Freedom.* Of that moment let Tyrants beware.

N^o II.

My Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

My late Townsmen and Neighbours,

AFTER living with you eleven years, in which you had uniform experience of my peaceful behaviour, in my attention to the quiet duties of my profession, and those of philosophy, I was far from expecting the injuries which I and my friends have lately received from you. But you have been misled. By hearing the Dissenters, and particularly the Unitarian Dissenters, continually railed at, as enemies to the present government, in church and state, you have been led to consider any injury done to us as a meritorious thing; and not having been better informed, the means were not attended to. When the *object* was right, you thought the *means* could not be wrong. By the discourses of your teachers, and the exclamations of your superiors in general, drinking confusion and damnation to us (which is well known to have been their frequent practice) your bigotry has been excited to the highest pitch, and nothing having been said to you to moderate your passions, but every thing to inflame them; hence, without any consideration on your part, or on theirs, who ought to have

have known, and taught you better, you were prepared for every species of outrage; thinking that whatever you could do to spite and injure us, was for the support of government, and especially the church. In *destroying* us, you have been led to think, *you did God* and your country the most substantial *service*.

Happily, the minds of Englishmen have an horror of *murder*, and therefore you did not, I hope, think of *that*; though by your clamorous demanding of *me* at the Hotel, it is probable, that at that time, some of you intended me some personal injury. But what is the value of life, when every thing is done to make it wretched? In many cases, there would be greater mercy in dispatching the inhabitants, than in burning their houses. However, I infinitely prefer what I feel from *the spoiling of my goods*, to the disposition of those who have misled you.

You have destroyed the most truly valuable and useful apparatus of philosophical instruments, that perhaps any individual, in this or any other country, was ever possessed of; in my use of which I annually spent large sums, with no pecuniary view whatever, but only in the advancement of science, for the benefit of my country, and of mankind. You have destroyed a library corresponding to that apparatus, which no money can re-purchase, except in a long course of time. But what I feel far more, you have destroyed *manuscripts*, which have been the result of the laborious study of many years, and which I shall never be able to re-compose; and this has been done to one who never did, or imagined you any harm.

I know nothing more of the *band-bill*, which is said to have enraged you so much, than any of yourselves, and I disapprove of it as much; though it has been made the ostensible handle of doing infinitely more mischief than any thing of that nature could possibly have done. In the celebration of the French Revolution, at which I did not attend, the company assembled on the occasion, only expressed their joy in the emancipation of a neighbouring nation

K 2

from

from tyranny, without intimating a desire of any thing more than such an improvement of our own constitution as all sober citizens, of every persuasion have long wished for. And though, in answer to the gross and unprovoked calumnies of Mr. Madan, and others, I publicly vindicated my principles as a Dissenter, it was only with plain and sober argument, and with perfect good humour. We are better instructed in the mild and forbearing spirit of christianity, than ever to think of having recourse to *violence*; and can you think such conduct as yours any recommendation of your religious principles in preference to ours?

You are still more mistaken, if you imagine that this conduct of yours has any tendency to serve your cause, or to prejudice ours. It is nothing but *reason* and *argument* than can ever support any system of religion. Answer our arguments, and your business is done; but your having recourse to *violence*, is only a proof that you have nothing better to produce. Should you destroy myself as well as my house, library, and apparatus, ten more persons, of equal or superior spirit and ability, would instantly rise up. If those ten were destroyed, an hundred would appear; and believe me, that the church of England, which you now think you are supporting, has received a greater blow by this conduct of yours, than I and all my friends have ever aimed at it.

Besides, to abuse those who have no power of making resistance, is equally cowardly and brutal, peculiarly unworthy of Englishmen, to say nothing of christianity, which teaches us to do as we would be done by. In this business we are the sheep, and you the wolves. We will preserve our character, and hope you will change yours. At all events, we return you blessings for curses; and pray that you may soon return to that industry, and those sober manners, for which the inhabitants of Birmingham were formerly distinguished.

I am your sincere well-wisher,

LONDON,
July 19, 1791.

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o III.*An Account of the Origin of the Riots in Birmingham,
from a Newspaper called THE TIMES.*

Tuesday, July 19, 1791.

BY every account which has arrived from Birmingham, and from authenticated facts in corroboration of what we have already asserted, it is an indisputable truth, that the motives which occasioned the havoc already made among the Dissenters at Birmingham, and which is still in continuance, solely sprung from the loyalty of the people, and the utter abhorrence in which the principles of a republican system of government are held by the public at large.

The public were determined before they proceeded to violence, to have some further proof of the intention of those commemoration men. The hand-bill might be a forgery,—or might be an insidious scheme to raise a mob for the purpose of plunder;—they therefore waited until they heard what was said at table—how the political complexion of the company would manifest itself,—and whether any thing more than a mere scene of commemoration conviviality was intended.

They had indeed their suspicions; and those suspicions, after the first course were realised, by the following toast being drank;—

‘DESTRUCTION TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT—AND
THE KING’S HEAD UPON A CHARGER!’

The inhabitants, and they were almost to a man respectable housekeepers and manufacturers, who waited outside the Hotel to watch the motions of the Revolutionists within, no sooner had this treasonable toast made known to them, than LOYALTY swift as lightning shot through their minds, and a kind of electrical patriotism animated them to instant vengeance. They rushed into

this conventicle of treason, and before the second course was well laid upon the table, broke the windows and glassess, pelted and insulted these modern reformers, and obliged them to seek for safety in immediate flight.

An inflammatory bill in Doctor Priestley's handwriting was found among his papers, and has been transmitted to the Secretary of State—The Doctor is at Kidderminster, to which place it is said the populace mean to follow him. His doctrines, they avow, were meant to subvert the Constitution.

Mr. Parker, a very eminent attorney, is the person who sent up the inflammatory and treasonable paper found in Priestley's house, and in the Doctor's own hand, which it is thought is a full ground for prosecution.

IT may be amusing to some of my readers, to see the following account of the riots at Birmingham, written on the spot and at the time, by a member of the establishment, in letters to a friend of his near Maidstone in Kent, and published in a *Supplement to the Maidstone Journal*, for Tuesday, July the 19th, last, as it shows with how little feeling, or sense of impropriety, some persons can relate the most atrocious actions, in the full view of all their enormity, when they are well wishers to the *cause* in which they are performed. The mistakes and exaggerations in this account are also amusing. I would likewise observe that Mr. Walter, the printer of the paper called *THE TIMES*, assures me that his account, false and malignant as it is, was written by "a gentleman of great respectability,"

"tability, at Birmingham, and of large commercial concerns." But this kind of *respectability* does not always give liberality of sentiment, just notions of right and wrong, or proper feelings.

.....

LETTER I.

Thursday Evening.

"THE deists here, after their utmost endeavours, sat down eighty-two. The mob increasing in number and silence, they broke up in less than two hours—their names will appear in white letters and black paper. Some of them were rudely handled. Priestley durst not appear, the inclosed paper * inflamed much. I cannot think we have any thing to fear; we must be blind indeed, provided the kingdom is as flourishing as Birmingham, for we are richer, and our trade better than ever."

.....

LETTER II.

Sunday Noon.

"TO remove your fears on our account, I send you the particulars of our commotions: on Thursday evening the zealous assembled in St. Philip's church-yard, and broke a few windows at the Hotel; Dadley appearing, declared himself attached to high church and king. It was settled for their leader to examine his house, and not a disaffected person being there, they went to the New Meeting, which was soon in flames; then to the Old Meeting, but they first desired the charity children to be

* Alluding to the seditious hand-bill.

sent

sent to their homes;—they were informed the houses on each side belonged to loyalists, whose property they are as cautious of as possible: therefore, to preserve whatever belonged to them, they gutted the Old Meeting, laid the wood in a pile in the meeting-yard, and burnt it there; then took the bricks down with care, which employed them all night: a party was sent to secure Dr. Priestley, who escaped very narrowly: his house with every thing they could find fell a victim to the flames, they then destroyed Mr. Ryland's house, late Baskerville's; then Bordesley, then Mr. Hutton's. I went by desire of our neighbour Cooper into Hutton's house, to request they would not fire it, as many loyal people would suffer. They knew me, shook me heartily by the hand, and promised me *no fire*, which was observed. I am confidently informed that a woman bringing a candle was knocked down; they then went to Mr. G. Humphrys's, Mr. W. Russell's, and Moseley-Hall, where they waited for the tenant, Lady Carhampton, removing her effects, they then destroyed the house as they had done those of the preceding persons. They are still in the country: their objects are the Meeting-house at Withwood-heath, with the teacher's, Coates's at the Five-ways, late Wesley's, and Lady Wood; and they declare, that unless Priestley is delivered to them, no Dissenters shall escape. On Friday five hundred gentlemen began cudgelling them, and drove them, but this only made them more outrageous, and we have now no hopes of quieting them but from the military; the same day, they gave notice by their bellman, that every house that had not high *church and King*, written upon it, would be destroyed.

“No money, or any thing else has any influence, nor have they been diverted from any one of their attempts; they seem to move quite systematically, and say, they are only doing what their enemies would have done by them. We are, I consider, quite safe; the only inconvenience we have felt, has been from a few stragglers, who have taken
the

the advantage of the times in extorting money, but the *loyal* mob, yesterday, as soon as they were informed of it, sent a party who beat them severely, and they are at present dispersed.

"P.S. I am informed they are now at Edgbaston, in consequence of their finding a letter of Dr. W. at Russell's; they now say they regard no persuasion, every enemy to high church shall fall."

Mr. Ryland's house, which has been burnt down, was set fire too on account of his son's having assisted in the escape of Dr. Priestley, whom the mob have pursued in different directions. Should the Doctor not be able to elude their vigilance, it is much to be apprehended that they will murder him, as he is considered the mischievous author of all the treasonable hand-bills that have been circulated about the town, and which first produced the riot.

The Methodists and followers of the Countess of Huntingdon have been all protected. In the beginning of the riots the mob went to some of their houses, and questioned them concerning the doctrines which they professed, and on their declaring for *church and King*, they were assured that they should remain unmolested. The church people walk about as usual, without the smallest apprehension of danger.

The Hotel belonging to *Dadley*, where the Revolutionists dined, has been only damaged by the windows being broken, the mob refusing to pull it down, because he was a churchman.

Mr. Humphrys, whose house at the turnpike was pulled down, offered the mob 4000 and afterwards 8000 guineas if they would desist; but they declared that money was not their object, and that they pulled down his house because they considered him as a principal person concerned in

in the inflammatory hand-bills; perhaps too for his ridiculing the national church by building a cow-lodge in the form of a chapel.

A letter dated Sunday night at eleven o'clock, says, "Unless some soldiers arrive early to-morrow morning, we are in very great apprehension that every Dissenter's house in Birmingham will be destroyed, and with them, no doubt, many other houses which were never intended. Near one hundred houses have been set on fire and pulled down, and about sixty more are marked for the purpose of being burnt or destroyed. At nine o'clock last night it was computed that the damage already done amounted to 250,000*l*. Those which we have mentioned belong to principal people."

N^o IV.

Mr. Russell's Letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

SIR,

BEING in London, and seeing in *The Times* of yesterday the most atrocious calumny that was ever laid before the public, I feel it my duty immediately to contradict it in the most pointed terms. I do therefore declare, that the narrative of the Birmingham Constitutional Dinner is materially untrue; and that the account given of the *first Toast*, in *The Times*, is a most flagrant falsehood. It was, *The King and Constitution*.

The Meeting broke up without the least riot or disturbance.—That the public may judge, whether the proceedings of the day, and the Toasts, were or were not reprehensible, the following true narrative is now produced, the authenticity and truth of which I will vouch for.

The

The proceedings of the day were preceded by an advertisement in the Birmingham Chronicle, published that morning, of which the following is a copy:

Birmingham Commemoration of the French Revolution.

Several Hand-bills having been circulated in the Town, which can only be intended to create distrust concerning the intention of the Meeting, to disturb its harmony and inflame the minds of the people; the Gentlemen who proposed it, think it necessary to declare their entire disapprobation of all such Hand-bills, and their ignorance of the authors.—Sensible themselves of the advantages of a free Government, they rejoice in the extension of Liberty to their neighbours, at the same time avowing, in the most explicit manner, their firm attachment to the Constitution of their own Country, as vested in the Three Estates of King, Lords, and Commons: Surely no *free-born Englishman* can refrain from exulting in this addition to the general mass of human happiness. It is the cause of *humanity*, it is the cause of the people.

Birmingham, July 13, 1791.

In the morning, however, after this was published many rumours of the probability of a riot were brought to the friends of the Meeting; and as there was too much reason to think that means had been used to promote one, they determined to postpone the intended Dinner, and accordingly agreed to put it off, and prepared a hand-bill for that purpose, of which the following is a copy:

Intended Commemoration of the French Revolution.

The Friends of the intended Festivity, finding that their views and intention, in consequence of being misconceived by some, and misrepresented by others, have created an alarm in the minds of the majority of the town, and it is thought, endangered its tranquility, inform their neighbours that they value the peace of the town far beyond the gratification of a Festival, and therefore have determined to give up their intentions of dining at the Hotel upon this occasion; and they very gladly improve this renewed opportunity of declaring that they are to this hour entirely ignorant of the Author, Printer, or Publisher, of the inflammatory Hand-bill circulated on Monday.

This was sent to the Printer; but before he had composed it, Mr. Dadley, the Master of the Hotel, attended,
in

in consequence of having the Dinner countermanded; and represented, that he was sure there was no danger of any tumult, and recommended that the Dinner might be had as was intended; only proposing, that the gentlemen should take care to break up early, and then all danger would be avoided. This measure was then adopted, and orders given to the Printer to suppress the hand-bill. Accordingly there was a meeting of eighty-one gentlemen, inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, at the Great Room in the Hotel, where they dined and passed the afternoon with that social, temperate, and benevolent festivity, which the consideration of the great event, which has diffused liberty and happiness among a large portion of the human race, inspired.

The following Toasts were drunk, and were agreeably intermixed with songs, composed and sung by some of the company.

1. The King and Constitution.
2. The National Assembly and Patriots of France, whose virtue and wisdom have raised twenty-six millions from the mean condition of subjects of despotism, to the dignity and happiness of freemen.
3. The Majesty of the People.
4. May the New Constitution of France be rendered perfect and perpetual.
5. May Great Britain, Ireland, and France unite in perpetual friendship, and may their only rivalry be the extension of Peace and Liberty, Wisdom and Virtue.
6. The Rights of Man. May all nations have the wisdom to understand, and the courage to assert and defend them.
7. The true Friends of the Constitution of this Country, who wish to preserve its spirit, by correcting its abuses.
8. May the people of England never cease to remonstrate, till their Parliament becomes a true National Representation.
9. The Prince of Wales.
10. The United States of America. May they for ever enjoy the Liberty which they have so honourably acquired.
11. May the late Revolution in Poland prove the harbinger of a more perfect system of Liberty extending to that great Kingdom.
12. May the Nations of Europe, become so enlightened as never more to be deluded into savage wars, by the mad ambition of their rulers.

13. May the sword be never unsheathed, but for the defence and liberty of our country, and then may every man cast away the scabbard, until the people are safe and free.

14. To the glorious memory of Hampden and Sydney, and other heroes of all ages and nations, who have fought and bled for liberty.

15. To the memory of Dr. Price, and of all those illustrious sages who have enlightened mankind on the true principles of civil society.

16. Peace and good-will to all mankind.

17. Prosperity to the town of Birmingham.

18. A happy Meeting to all the Friends of Liberty on the 14th of July, 1792.

It is but justice to the liberality and public spirit of an ingenious Artist of this town to mention, that he decorated the room upon this occasion with three elegant emblematic pieces of sculpture, mixed with painting, in a new style of composition. The central piece was a finely executed medallion of his majesty, encircled with a glory, on each side of which was an alabaster obelisk; the one exhibiting Gallic liberty breaking the bands of despotism, and the other representing British liberty in its present enjoyment.

A truly respectable gentleman, a member of the church of England, was Chairman—others of that profession were of the company, nor was a single sentiment uttered, or I believe, conceived, that would hurt the feelings of any one friend to liberty and good government, under the happy constitution we are blessed with in this kingdom.—I aver this to be a true and just representation of the proceedings which have been so scandalously misrepresented in the Paper above-mentioned; and am,

Sir,

LONDON,

Your obedient servant.

London, July 20, 1791.

WILLIAM RUSSELL.

N^o V.*Mr. Keir's Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham and Stafford Chronicle.*

MR. PRINTER,

AS I find that many gross falsehoods have been circulated through the country, in order to inflame the minds of the people concerning the meeting held last Thursday, to commemorate the French Revolution, I will beg leave to state what I myself have had occasion to know respecting that subject.—Some gentlemen in Birmingham had proposed by an advertisement in the newspapers, to hold a meeting of the friends of liberty and of mankind, at the Hotel, to commemorate the French Revolution, in the same manner as was done in London, and many other parts in the kingdom. Two days before the time appointed for this meeting, a very respectable gentleman called on me, and said he came to tell me, that it was the general wish of those who intended to meet, that I should be their chairman, on the occasion. I accepted the compliment, and promised to come to Birmingham to attend, never conceiving that a peaceable meeting, for the purpose of rejoicing that twenty-six millions of our fellow-creatures were rescued from despotism, and made as free and happy as we Britons are, could be misinterpreted as being offensive to a government, whose greatest boast is liberty, or to any who profess the christian religion, which orders us to love our neighbours as ourselves.—We accordingly met and dined with the greatest peace and harmony, and after drinking some toasts, expressive in the first place of our loyalty to our own *King and Constitution*; and in the second place of our joy at the happiness which the French have acquired by their new Constitution, we dissolved the meeting entirely, in the greatest order, between five and six in the evening,

evening, and quitted the Hotel, every man retiring separately to his home, or to his private affairs. I returned to my house in the country, nor knew of the disturbances till next day. The meeting in London was conducted with the same decorum, nor has there been an instance, as far as I know, in the many similar meetings throughout England, of the smallest irregularity attempted by them. Now, Mr. Printer, as actions are the best interpreters of men's intentions, it is evident that the malicious insinuations, that these meetings were intended to disturb the peace and government of the country, have been by the event proved to be false and groundless.

I have lately heard that it is reported that we drank disloyal and seditious toasts. Now the very first toast that was given was, *The King and the Constitution*. I do not know any words in the English language expressive of greater loyalty; and one of the last was, *Peace and goodwill to all mankind*, which cannot easily be interpreted to excite people to tumult. I shall hereafter publish a list of all the toasts, which were altogether in the same spirit of loyalty, peace, and charity.

A second report is, that Justice Carles was insulted and turned out of the room. The fact is, that Justice Carles never was in the room, and therefore it is not easy to conceive how he could be turned out. I will add, that I have not the smallest doubt, that if that gentleman had come, he would have been received with due respect.

A third false report was, that a seditious hand-bill had been distributed by the members of the meeting, on some preceding day. A seditious and truly infamous hand-bill had been distributed, it is true, but by whom written or distributed is not known. It is heartily to be wished that the persons concerned may be discovered, and punished according to law. As soon as the gentlemen of Birmingham, who had concerted the Commemoration Meeting, saw this hand-bill, they perceived that the effect, and perhaps the intention of it, was to inflame the mob against them,

them, and they immediately published in the Thursday's newspaper, an advertisement declaring their disavowal of this hand-bill, and their own loyal attachment to the *King, Lords, and Commons*. They also sent hand-bills with copies of this advertisement all over Birmingham. It was not possible for them to do any thing more effectual to prevent any bad effects from this seditious paper, or to rescue themselves from the calumny of their being the authors of it.

The last false report that I have heard relative to that meeting is concerning Dr. Priestley's behaviour there. To this I suppose it will be sufficient to answer, that *Dr. Priestley was not present*.

These are all the reports which I have heard, but I doubt not there may be many others, of the truth of which every man of common sense will judge from what I have said of those which have come to my knowledge. Nevertheless, these false reports are all the pretences for the late horrible riots; but the event shews that they were only *pretences*, and that the Dissenters were the true object of the fury of the mob, as many of those gentlemen who have suffered from the riots were not present. For the business of the Commemoration meetings had nothing to do with religious distinctions, and were in other parts composed of Churchmen, Catholics, and Dissenters. It is true, that in Birmingham, the majority were Dissenters; but it is evident that they did not wish it to be distinguished as a party meeting, when they did me the honour to chuse me as their chairman, who, it was evident, must have conformed, in order to qualify myself for the commissions which I have held in the army, to all the formalities prescribed by the Test Act, and who never was present in a dissenting meeting above once or twice in England; although I have the greatest regard for the dissenting individuals whom I know, among whom are several of the late unfortunate victims, men as peaceable, respectable, and loyal as any in the kingdom. But as the
subject

subject of the commemoration meeting was quite unknown to the ignorant part of the people, it gave an opportunity of raising any lies that were necessary to inflame the mob to execute their horrid purposes.—But that the proceedings of the meeting were innocent, peaceable, and honourable, and also free from every subject relative to religious parties, I solemnly affirm. I am, Mr. Printer,

Yours, &c.

West-Bromwich,
July 20, 1791.

JAMES KEIR.

N^o VI.

Copy of a Letter to me, printed in a column opposite to my own Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, and thrown into many houses in London with the title of SELF-MURDER, OR THE DOCTOR TRIED AND CONVICTED BY HIS OWN EVIDENCE.

SIR,

YOU have appealed to the public in vindication of your conduct, and lamented your losses with the feelings of a man; they are great, because in one respect irreparable.

But whilst I join with the public in regretting the destruction of your philosophical property, it pains me to aver that you have not proved your political innocence.

You and your friends have been charged as enemies to the present system of government: let us examine how you attempt to disprove that assertion.

You say, that your friends met to express their joy at the French Revolution, and to intimate a desire that an improvement should take place in our constitution.

L

Does

Does the inference to be drawn from this, prove you, and those of your persuasion, to be friends to the present established government?—Surely not.

By celebrating the French Revolution, you give your sanction to the system adopted in that country. If you did not sanction, you would not celebrate; and by desiring an improvement, at the same moment, in the British constitution, you declare yourself inimical to our government in its present form. He who is inimical to any matter, cannot be a friend; and the opposite to that character is, of course, an enemy. Your letter has afforded me these premises, and the conclusion is fairly drawn, from that which is fully established.

It is not your religious, but your political sentiments which are thought dangerous to the state. The Presbyterians certainly approve the conduct of that usurped authority which decollated the unhappy CHARLES. Our constitution considers that bloody act of common-wealth tyranny, to be a martyrdom. The difference in political sentiments on this great point, can therefore never be reconciled. It is as opposite as monarchy and republicanism can make it. Were I to ask you, if the doctrine laid down by Mr. Paine in his *Rights of Man*, coincided with your principles?—you would certainly say that “it does.” You cannot successfully controvert that assertion.

Now, Sir, this publication of Mr. Paine’s is a gross libel upon the spirit and letter of the British constitution, and as it is received into your community as a political truth, and that in approving such doctrine, you and your friends cannot disapprove the French Revolution, I wish to know what sort of amendment you would make to the British government.

You have made a distinction in your letter, between the constitutional subjects of Great Britain and your sect. You divide them by saying, “our cause,” and “your cause.” The constitutional subjects’ *cause*, is the present government in church and state,—your cause must be the
opposite

opposite to that;—and therefore it is some other kind of government in church and state; and though you have not directly said that you ever attacked the state, you fairly acknowledge to have given our church a BLOW:—Your words are, “The church of England, which you now “think you are supporting, has received a greater blow by “this conduct, than I and all my friends *have ever aimed “at it.*” This is a direct avowal that you and your friends have aimed a blow at our religious rights.

Do you call this *peaceably* following your studies as a minister of the gospel and a philosopher?—No, Mr. Priestley, it is such kind of turbulent conduct that has brought you and your friends into the present situation.

Had you, Sir, and those of your persuasion, quietly attended the duties of your respective stations, and left the Protestant church and the British government to the care of those who are appointed by the constitution, as Representatives of the people, to guard and protect them; you might have enjoyed that ease, happiness, and peace, which every good subject is entitled to expect from the excellence of our laws, and the honour and integrity of those men who compose the three branches of the legislature.

July 20, 1791.

JOHN CHURCHMAN.

Nº VII.

*Copy of a Hand-bill distributed in London the Day
after I arrived there.*

DR. PRIESTLEY is a damned rascal, an enemy both to the religious and political constitution of this country, a fellow of a treasonable mind, consequently a bad christian: for it is not only the duty, but the glorious ambition, of every good christian to *fear God and honour the King.*

L 2

Nº. VIII.

N^o VIII.*Copies of two Hand-bills distributed among the Rioters.*

Birmingham, July 16, 1791.

Friends and Fellow Countrymen,

IT is earnestly requested that every *true friend* to the *Church of England*, and to the laws of his country, will reflect how much a *continuance* of the present proceedings must injure *that Church* and *that King* they are *intended to support*; and how highly unlawful it is to destroy the rights and property of *any* of our neighbours. And all *true friends* to the town and trade of Birmingham, *in particular*, are intreated to forbear *immediately* from all riotous and violent proceedings; dispersing and returning peaceably to their trades and callings, as the only way to do *credit to themselves* and *their cause*, and to promote the peace, happiness, and prosperity of this great and flourishing town.

Birmingham, Sunday, July 17, 1791.

*Important Information to the Friends of Church and King.**Friends and Fellow Churchmen,*

BEING convinced you are unacquainted, that the great losses which are sustained by *your burning* and *destroying* of the houses of so many individuals, will eventually fall upon the *county at large*, and not upon the persons to whom they belonged, we feel it our duty to inform you, that the damages already done, upon the best computation that can be made, will amount to upwards of *One Hundred Thousand Pounds*; the whole of which

enormous

enormous sum will be charged upon the respective parishes, and paid out of the rates, We, therefore, as your *friends*, conjure you immediately to desist from the destruction of *any more houses*; otherwise the very proceedings of your *zeal* for shewing your attachment to the CHURCH and KING, will inevitably be the means of most seriously injuring innumerable families, who are hearty supporters of Government, and bring an addition of taxes, which *yourselves, and the rest of the Friends of the Church*, will for years feel a very grievous burthen.

This we assure you was the case in London, when there were so many houses, and public buildings burnt and destroyed in the year 1780, and you may rely upon it, will be the case on the present occasion. And we must observe to you, that *any further* violent proceedings will more offend your King and Country than serve the cause of Him and the Church.

Fellow Churchmen, as you love your King, regard his laws, and restore peace.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Aylesford

E. Finch

Robert Lawley

Robert Lawley, Jun.

R. Moland

W. Digby

Edward Carver

John Brooke

J. Carles

B. Spencer

H. Gres. Lewis

Charles Curtis

Spencer Madan

Edward Palmer

W. Villers

W. W. Mason

•• It is particularly hoped, for the HONOUR OF THE TOWN, that all Persons whatsoever will shew a due observance of the SABBATH DAY, by desisting from every riotous or disorderly proceedings, as the strongest proof they can give of their principles in favour of the present establishment in CHURCH and STATE.

N^o IX.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address of the High Bailiff, Clergy, and other principal Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham.

May it please your Majesty,

"WE, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the High Bailiff, Clergy, and other principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, deeply sensible of your Majesty's paternal care of all your subjects, beg leave most humbly to approach your royal throne, with hearts full of gratitude for the recent instance of that care which your Majesty graciously condescended to afford us during the late riots in this place, by commanding such particular attention to be paid to our security, and directing such ample relief for our necessities.

"Rejoicing also in every opportunity of testifying our loyalty to the best of Sovereigns, and our firm attachment to that noble fabric the constitution of this country, the envy of all other nations, as it is the glory of our own; We cannot neglect this occasion of pledging ourselves to support your Majesty's illustrious house, and to defend that happy constitution both in church and state, against every attempt at innovation, at the risk of every thing dear to us."

N^o X.*The Address of the Dissenters to the King.*

"Most gracious Sovereign,

"WE, your Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Protestant Dissenters in the town of Birmingham, beg leave to approach your Majesty in a moment of serious affliction and concern, arising not only from our recent aggravated sufferings, but from our painful apprehensions lest the calumnies of our enemies should influence your royal mind, and insinuate suspicions of our loyalty and affection.

Assured

Assured not of our innocence alone, but of our unalterable attachment to your august person, and to the succession of your Royal House, we respectfully claim your Majesty's continued protection and favour, and beg leave most earnestly to assure your Majesty, we have no thoughts of disturbing the Constitution. We are the descendants of those to whom (as the annals of our country will testify) the Revolution, which secured to your illustrious house the crown of these kingdoms, was greatly indebted. The civil constitution of our country is our pride and our glory; which we have been taught from our infancy to revere, and which we would die to preserve. Indeed, Sire, though deeply afflicted by the late riotous devastations, and by the want of energy in the civil power, yet we speak from hearts that are actuated by the love of law, of peace, of order, and good government. Sensible of your Majesty's goodness, in the vigorous measures which have been adopted for suppressing the outrages, which a lawless banditti were spreading through this place and its environs, we offer you the warmest tribute of our gratitude, for the happy deliverance we have experienced, by the wisdom of the measures planned by your Majesty's ministers, and by the energy and promptitude with which they were so successfully executed.

We feel ourselves deeply thankful to your Majesty, for this very beneficial and decisive instance of your royal attention; and likewise to your great goodness, in the measures which have since been adopted, for discovering and bringing to exemplary punishment, as well the instigators, as the perpetrators of the late atrocious violences; and we firmly and dutifully rely upon your Majesty for the continuance of it, as well as for the exercise of that candour and magnanimity, which will resist the calumnies of our enemies, and continue to us that protection, favour, and confidence, to which we know ourselves justly entitled.

That your Majesty may long reign in peace and glory; that your royal honours may for ages continue to descend

to your latest posterity; and that the happiness of Britain may prosper and improve itself under their auspicious influence, is the honest wish and fervent prayer of, Sire,
Your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects.

N^o XI.

From the Committee of Dissenters.

WHEREAS it now appears, that among other insidious and unwarrantable practices made use of during the late riots, to delude the populace, and instigate them to acts of violence and destruction, letters were forged, charging the Dissenters with a treasonable design to overthrow the present happy constitution of this kingdom, and pretending that the whole body of them were combined together, and had appointed to assemble on the 16th of August, "to burn the churches, blow up the parliament, cut off the head of the King, and abolish all taxes:" And whereas it is now well known, that such forged letters were pretended to be found among the papers of the Rev. Dr. Priestley, and William Russell, Esq. and the words above quoted formed part of one of the forged letters which were brought and read by two persons on horse-back at Showell-green, the house of Wm. Russell, Esq. whilst the same was in flames, in order to instigate the rioters to further acts of violence: Notice is hereby given, that the Protestant Dissenters of Birmingham, in addition to the reward of One Hundred Pounds, graciously offered by his Majesty for discovering the instigators of the late horrid violences, will give a further reward of One Hundred Pounds for the discovery of the person or persons who wrote the said forged letters, or any one of them, so that he or they may be convicted thereof, and brought to punishment.

THOMAS LEE, Junior,

Secretary to the Committee of Protestant Dissenters
in Birmingham.

BIRMINGHAM,
August 22, 1791.

N^o XII.

Copy of a Letter addressed to the Bishops, and Members of the House of Commons, mentioned in page 20, of this Work.

SIR,

AS I am informed that a *printed paper*, containing *Extracts* from the Preface to one of my late publications, viz. *Letters to the Rev. Edward Burn*, has been sent by some enemies of the Dissenters, probably by some of the clergy of this town, to every Member of Parliament. and also to all the Bishops, and that it made a very unfavourable impression with respect to the question before the House, on Tuesday the second instant, it will not, I hope, be deemed impertinent, to shew you how much you have been imposed upon by it. For had the *Extracts* been given together with what is *connected* with them, they would have appeared in a very different light indeed. The following paragraph, from p. 15, I give as a specimen of the whole, printing what has been selected in the *Roman* character, and what immediately follows it, but which has been omitted, in *Italic*.

“Whether I be more pleased or displeased, with their present violence, let them” (the clergy) “now judge. The greater their violence, the greater is our confidence of final success. *Because it will excite more public discussion, which is all that is necessary for our purpose.*”

In the same Preface there is the following *Note*, p. 12, which is in perfect agreement with the tenor of all my writings on the subject.

“It has always been my opinion, that Dissenters should not accept of any civil offices for which the majority of their countrymen have pronounced them disqualified, but patiently acquiesce in their exclusion
“from

“from them, till it shall please God, in the course of his
 “providence, and by means of our peaceable representa-
 “tions and remonstrances, to open the eyes, and enlarge
 “the minds, of our countrymen, and thereby give them
 “more just ideas of the natural rights of men, and the
 “true interests of their country.”

To a person of any sense of *honour*, whatever be his
political or religious principles, no remarks of mine can be
 necessary to shew the unfairness of this proceeding. Who-
 ever it be that could give those extracts as a just repre-
 sentation of my principles, must have *meant to deceive*, and
 therefore would not scruple to have recourse to any other
artifice to gain their point. The paper was sent off in a
 private manner, and too late to be discovered and coun-
 teracted; but when the same, or any similar question shall
 again come before the House, I hope you will remember
 whose conduct has always been open and manly, and
 whose was insidious and deceitful.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

Birmingham,
 MARCH 4, 1790.

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XIII.

*Copy of a Letter from M. Condorcet, Secretary to the
 Academy of Sciences at Paris, to Dr. Priestley.*

Sir, and most illustrious Associate,

THE Academy of Sciences have charged me
 to express the grief with which they are penetrated at the
 recital of the persecution of which you have been lately
 the victim.

They all feel how much loss the Sciences have expe-
 rienced by the destruction of those labours which you had
 prepared for their aggrandisement. It is not you, Sir, who
 have

have reason to complain; your virtue and your genius still remain undiminished, and it is not in the power of human ingratitude to forget what you have done for the happiness of mankind:—they only ought to be unhappy, whose guilty conduct has led their reason astray, and whose remorse has already punished their crimes.

You are not the first friend of liberty against whom tyrants have armed the very people whom they have deprived of their rights. These are the only means which they can make use of against him, whose disinterestedness of mind, whose elevation of soul, and whose purity of conduct, equally shelter him from their seductions and their vengeance.

They calumniate such a person when they can neither intimidate nor corrupt him; they arm prejudices against him, when they dare not arm the laws; and that which they have done in regard to you, is the noblest homage that tyranny dares to render to probity, to talents, and to courage.

At this present moment a league is formed throughout Europe against the general liberty of mankind; but for some time past another has existed, occupied with propagating and with defending this liberty, without any other arms than those furnished by reason; and these will finally triumph.

It is in the necessary order of things, that error should be momentary, and truth eternal. Men of genius, supported by their virtuous disciples, when placed in the balance against the vulgar mob of corrupt intriguers—the instruments or the accomplices of tyrants—must at length prevail against them.

The glorious day of Universal Liberty will shine upon our descendants, but we shall at least enjoy the *aurora*; and you, Sir, have contributed not a little to accelerate that happy event by your labours, by the example of your virtues, by the indignation which all Europe feels against your persecutors, and by the interest and the admiration
which

which a misfortune has excited, that, although it may wound, cannot subdue your soul.

I am, with an inviolable and respectful attachment,

Sir, and my very illustrious associate,

Your humble and most obedient servant,

Paris, July 30, 1791.

CONDORCET.

N^o XIV.

Dr. Priestley's Answer.

SIR,

I AM more than consoled for my losses, in finding that the Members of the Academy of Sciences have done me the honour to interest themselves in my affairs, and especially in observing that the friends of philosophy are, what they ever ought to be, the friends of general liberty. With us there is an example of the enemies of the one being also the enemies of the other. Having always been an avowed advocate of public liberty, civil and religious, which lead me to write in defence of your late glorious Revolution, the great body of the Clergy in this country, and many of those who call themselves the friends of the King, have long been my enemies; and in accomplishing my ruin they have not spared the instruments of that science, my application to which gave some degree of weight to my labours in another field.

But do not, Sir, suppose that *these* friends of the Church and of the King are the English nation. They are no more than a faction, whom a failure in the way of argument has rendered desperate. The sober part of the nation think more justly, and equally disapprove their maxims, and the methods they take to enforce them. The English nation in general respect the French; and, though too many of them are at present under a temporary delusion, will vie with you in every thing truly liberal, in
whatever

whatever can contribute to the honour and happiness of the country at home, and to its living in peace and goodwill with all its neighbours, and especially with yourselves, whose exertions in favour of universal liberty, and universal peace, will for ever endear you to us.

Assure my brethren of the Academy, that, honoured by their choice of me for an associate, and by their generous sympathy on the present occasion, I shall not fail, while my life and my faculties are continued to me, to resume my philosophical pursuits, and endeavour to shew our common enemies, that a genuine love of science, and of liberty, is inextinguishable, except with life, and that unreasonable and wicked opposition tends to animate, rather than depress, the mind that is penetrated with it.

In perfect confidence that whatever is *true and right* will finally prevail, and that every mode of opposition will only contribute to their more complete establishment, I subscribe myself with respect,

Sir,

Their, and your, very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XV.

An Address to Dr. Priestley, agreed upon at a Meeting of the Philosophical Society at Derby, Sept. 3, 1791.

SIR,

WE condole with yourself, and with the scientific world, on the loss of your valuable library, your experimental apparatus, and your more valuable manuscripts: at the same time we beg leave to congratulate you on your personal safety, in having escaped the sacrilegious hands of the savages at Birmingham.

Almost all great minds in all ages of the world, who have endeavoured to benefit mankind, have been persecuted

cuted by them; GALILEO, for his philosophical discoveries, was imprisoned by the Inquisition; and SOCRATES found a cup of hemlock his reward for teaching "there is one God." Your enemies, unable to conquer your arguments by reason, have had recourse to violence; they have halloo'd upon you the dogs of unfeeling ignorance, and of frantic fanaticism; they have kindled fires like those of the Inquisition, not to illuminate the truth, but, like the dark lantern of the assassin, to light the murderer to his prey. Your philosophical friends, therefore, hope that you will not again risk your person among a people, whose bigotry renders them incapable of instruction: they hope you will leave the unfruitful fields of polemical theology, and cultivate that philosophy, of which you may be called the father, and which, by inducing the world to think and reason, will silently marshal mankind against delusion, and with greater certainty overturn the empire of superstition.

In spite of the persecution you have sustained, we trust that you will persevere in the exertions of Virtue, and the improvements of science. Your fame, already conspicuous to every civilized nation of the world, shall rise like a phoenix from the flames of your elaboratory with renovated vigour, and shine with brighter coruscation.

R. ROE, Secretary.

.....

Nº XVI.

THE ANSWER.

London, Sep. 19, 1791.

Gentlemen,

I FEEL myself greatly encouraged in my present sufferings from the effects of bigotry, by the sympathy expressed by you, and by other liberal friends of science here and abroad.

It

It will be a new thing in the world if any thing truly valuable lose credit, or have a less rapid spread, in consequence of persecution. If any thing will bear to be viewed and examined, it must derive advantage from whatever draws attention to it; and such, I am confident, is the cause in which I suffer.

In consequence of this, far from being discouraged, I feel myself more animated than ever; and I am at this very time setting about the re-establishment of my philosophical apparatus, and resuming all my former pursuits.

Excuse me, however, if I still join theological to philosophical studies, and if I consider the former as greatly superior in importance to mankind to the latter. But as these different pursuits have never yet interfered with, but have promoted, each other, be persuaded that this will continue to be the case.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XVII.

From the Congregation of Mill-Hill Chapel, Leeds.

Rev. and dear Sir,

Leeds, Aug. 14, 1791.

WE, the Protestant Dissenters of Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds, cannot rest satisfied in a silent sympathy with you on the losses you have lately incurred from the violence of party rage.

While all the sincere friends of rational liberty and good order are roused to an honest indignation, by outrages which have disgraced our country in the eyes of enlightened Europe, we, having had the happiness of being under your pastoral care, feel a personal interest in your welfare. And as, from this intimate connexion with you, we have had a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with your real character than many others have enjoyed,

we

we the more readily embrace this opportunity of bearing our special testimony to its exemplary excellence. An interval of more than eighteen years has not effaced from our memory the good principles you inculcated upon us, and the affectionate care which you uniformly manifested for our advancement in every virtue. It was, in a peculiar degree, the object of your attention, to impress upon the minds of the young such sentiments as are best calculated to produce the peaceable and useful citizen, in all the departments in life, which many of us, who were then only rising to maturity, and are now the heads of families, gratefully acknowledge. We also recollect with pleasure, that when you instructed us in the reasons of a Protestant dissent from the established church, you were careful to guard us against the rancour of an intolerant spirit, and to form us to the genuine temper of that divine religion, which enjoins peace on earth, and good-will towards men. And though you always esteemed it your duty to oppose what appeared to you the erroneous opinions, and superstitious practices, of individuals, or bodies of men, you were so far from entertaining a hostile disposition to their persons or property, that you were solely actuated by a regard to their best interest; for which, however, they might think you mistaken, they ought to have felt themselves obliged. Rejoicing in the support which you derive from the ample resources of your own mind, especially those which are the result of a good conscience, and earnestly wishing you every good,

We remain,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your affectionate friends.

From

N^o XVIII.

From the Protestant Dissenters in Great Yarmouth.

Reverend Sir,

Yarmouth, July 29, 1791.

We, ministers and members of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Great Yarmouth, beg leave to express to you the interest we take in the late calamitous events which have befallen you. Differing in various matters of opinion, we all agree in warm admiration of your high abilities, your zealous researches after christian truth, and your distinguished exertions in the cause of civil and religious liberty. These qualities, which have made you the peculiar mark of the vengeance of bigotry, render your safety and welfare proportionably dear to us.

Whilst we lament your losses, not only as those of an individual, but of the public, we receive a consolation in the magnanimity with which you have borne them, and in the testimony this event has given to the world of the difference between the temper and conduct of those who support a good cause, and of those who oppose it.

What will be the final result of so atrocious an act we presume not to pronounce; but one good effect from it we think we can foresee, that of drawing closer the bands of union and amity amongst all the different bodies of Dissenters, who must henceforth feel that they have a common concern in each others welfare and security.

We request you to convey our cordial sentiments of condolence to your fellow sufferers, and remain, with sincere esteem, and every good wish,

Reverend Sir,

Your Friends and fellow Christians.

N^o XIX.

From the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue.

Dear Sir,

Nov. 10, 1791,

WHILST many societies of christians, widely differing from you in opinion, have with a noble generosity publicly declared their esteem for your character and virtues, and sympathize with you in your sufferings in the cause of truth, it would ill become us to be silent, who agree with you in the chief of those sentiments, which have, though most undeservedly, rendered you obnoxious to many.

We lament that in the established church, to which some of our number belong, blest with the labours and writings of Locke, of Newton, of Hoadly, of Clarke, and of Law, who all of them maintained the divine unity, and the sole unrivalled majesty and worship of the single person of the Father of the universe, for which you have so boldly stood forth, there should have been those in our day, who have so far degenerated from their fair example, and the precepts of the gospel, as to copy the manners of the darkest ages of christian barbarism in burning places of divine worship, and habitations of peaceful men, of different religious sentiments from their own: And not content with destroying your house, your library, and curious philosophical apparatus, together with the precious fruits of many years study in various branches of science, a loss to the whole world, have threatened to cut short the thread of a life constantly devoted to the glory of the Creator, and the benefit of mankind.

With still deeper concern has it filled our minds to observe many in the metropolis and in different parts of the country, from narrow prejudices and various unworthy motives,

motives, wholly insensible of the enormity of this burning and destroying spirit for the sake of religion, if not rejoicing in it, when exerted against Dissenters of a certain class; not considering its fatal consequences, and how soon, if not completely quelled, the same lawless spirit may be let loose upon themselves.

It is our ardent prayer, illustrious sufferer, that you may be supported as hitherto, through the hard conflict to which you have been called; and may continue to exemplify the true christian spirit, by your magnanimity, and pity only for your deluded adversaries, and by that your habitual cheerfulness, which is the natural attendant on integrity and benevolence.

And our hope is, for our country's honour, that your particular losses will be amply compensated, and that in no long time all the wise and good throughout the nation, will unite their endeavours to remove the principal source of religious animosities, by their earnest and unremitted exertions to obtain from the legislature the equal and impartial protection of law to every good citizen of whatever mode of faith or religion.

(Signed) MICHAEL DODSON, CHAIRMAN.

.....

N^o XX.

THE ANSWER.

My Christian Friends,

FROM your affectionate address I receive consolation of a kind peculiarly grateful to me. It is that of *brethren*, engaged in the same cause. For it is sufficiently evident, that it is my avowed opposition to the doctrine of the trinity (which, as affecting the object of worship, we think it our duty to enter our protest against) that has

rendered me peculiarly obnoxious. But this popular odium, and this degree of persecution, should not, as you are well persuaded, give us any alarm; as it is neither new, nor without obvious uses. This situation seems necessary in order to draw a sufficient degree of attention to our principles, and without which we cannot expect to see the complete prevalence of such great truths, as those for which we are contending. Neither christianity itself, nor any important reformation of it, was ever fully established without a similar process.

Persecution without law, as in the riots in Birmingham, has been as common as persecution according to the forms of it. By this means those who have some respect for the more liberal principles of the age, may think to screen themselves from the odium which has fallen on direct persecution for conscience sake. In this manner were the primitive christians, the Waldenses, the Albigenses, and the first reformers from popery, frequently treated; a licentious populace being instigated by the most atrocious calumnies to fall upon them, and to commit such unexpected ravages, as are more grievous than the known penalty of any law.

We need not be surprized that this persecuting spirit has shewn itself in some members of the church of England, notwithstanding the valuable labours of the great men you mention, whose principles, had they been duly attended to, and followed, would have ensured universal toleration. For with men who give but little attention to the essentials of religion, this spirit arises of course in every civil establishment of it, Heathen, Catholic, or Protestant; since all persons possessed of power will naturally have recourse to it, when they perceive other methods of promoting their cause to fail. And *all* persons in power are not so far instructed by the light of the present age, or the experience of the past, as to see the miserable policy of such measures. They are the first suggestion of chagrin, though they are sure to end in disappointment.

Let

Let us, my brethren, in the most gloomy prospects, console ourselves with the consideration, that every instance of persecution will render it more odious, and thereby accelerate its final cessation; that ignorance is the proper cause of all wrong conduct, and of this among the rest; that the time is coming when all men, fully enlightened with respect to their relation to each other, and to God their common parent, will feel as brethren, and be disposed to love and befriend each other, notwithstanding any difference of religious opinion or practice; and, therefore, that what has happened at Birmingham should make us more assiduous to diffuse that light which is sure to be attended with such desirable consequences. With this chearful prospect, I subscribe myself,

My christian Friends,

Your brother in the faith and hope of the Gospel,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Clapton, December 7, 1791.

No XXI.

*From the Members of the New Meeting Congregation,
in Birmingham.*

Rev. and dear Sir,

WE the afflicted and forrowing members of the New Meeting Society, in the midst of the anguish and anxiety which is inseparable from our present calamities, have greatly regretted that we could not before this day, assemble together, to confer upon the deplorable situation of our congregational affairs, and the measures necessary to be pursued in consequence of our persecutions. Being now met together for this purpose, we immediately embrace the opportunity of addressing ourselves to our well-beloved pastor, and beg to assure you how tenderly and affectionately we sympathize with you in the present season of severe trial and affliction, and that, in the spirit of christian love and affection, we most tenderly condole with you under your personal unmerited and painful sufferings.

Little did we conceive that the exemplary diligence with which we have seen you for the space of eleven years inculcate upon us, and our children, every thing that was good and virtuous, could be followed by such a dreadful catastrophe as we now feel and contemplate. Whatever misconceptions our neighbours may have unhappily adopted respecting your various publications, we dare appeal to them, and we testify to the world, that your pastoral labours have uniformly tended to every thing that becomes the christian, or can adorn the man, to a sincere and fervent piety towards God, and to peace and universal good-will to all mankind, without any distinction of sect or party.

You have uniformly taught us to respect the government under which we live; and in the devotional service of every Lord's day have never failed to offer up our
united

united prayers for the Divine blessing upon the King, his Royal Family, and all that are in authority under him; so that from whatever cause it may be that you have been marked out for persecution, and for the grievous calamities to which you are still exposed, we are sensible it cannot originate in any part of your pastoral labours, which all those strangers who have occasionally joined us (without some of whom scarce a Lord's day has passed) must witness as well as ourselves, have been conducted in the true spirit of the Gospel, in a spirit of love and peace, and though distinguished by an ardent desire to promote the cause of truth, yet still more uniformly directed to inculcate the great and primary duties of sincere piety towards God, and universal benevolence towards all mankind.

Accept, dear Sir, our unfeigned testimony to your exemplary diligence, your eminent abilities, your unremitted zeal, your distinguished humility, your unquestioned sincerity, and your uniform love of peace, christian forbearance and moderation; and permit us to assure you how affectionately and tenderly we sympathize with you under your present sufferings, and how sincerely we wish their removal. And although you are not immediately returning to us, yet we look forward with pleasure to those happier times when you may resume your pastoral labours here with safety and satisfaction.

In the mean time we earnestly recommend you to the Divine protection and favour, imploring him to watch over, to guide, and bless you, and in due time, to restore you to us, who are in the bonds of christian love and affection,

Rev. and ever dear Sir,

Your sincere and affectionate friends.

(Signed in the Name and at the unanimous request of the
Congregation)

BIRMINGHAM,

August 2, 1791.

W. RUSSELL.

N^o XXII.

THE ANSWER.

My Christian Brethren,

YOUR affectionate Letter has given me not only consolation, but joy. I rejoice to see the effects of those principles in which it has been my business, and that of my excellent Colleague, to instruct you; and the situation in which we now are is peculiarly adapted to try their force, and to shew the world that religion is not a business of mere speculation, but that it is capable of supporting the mind, and directing the conduct, in the most trying circumstances.

I rejoice that after being an example to other congregations, of purity of christian doctrine, and excellence of discipline, you are now an example of patience and fortitude in suffering; firmly maintaining the principles for which you suffer, and yet preserving your good-will towards the authors of your sufferings; not forgetting that there is the hand of God, as well as that of man, in every thing that befalls us; and praying that God would forgive your enemies and turn their hearts.

Be assured that in the height of my sufferings I would not (even without any respect to futurity) have exchanged my feelings with those of our persecutors, in the moment of their greatest exultation over us; for I never lost the feelings of pity and benevolence towards them, while I was the object of their hatred and execration. I have even found, as I doubt not yourselves have also done, that these christian sentiments are more easily exercised in great trials than in little ones, as they more effectually call forth the principles from which they proceed.

I rejoice that you are about to re-establish the affairs of our society, and I only wait your summons to assist you in that necessary work. Your call will be to me an intimation of my duty; and then committing my life to him
who

who gave it, and who will not suffer it to terminate unseasonably, I will instantly attend you, and resume the functions of the office with which you have honoured me. I know no satisfaction equal to that which has ever accompanied the discharge of such duties as those I owe to you.

Let what we have mutually suffered teach us the uncertainty of every thing in this world, and the value of those principles which enable us to look beyond it, and not only to bear, but to rejoice in tribulation; to esteem it an honour to be "counted worthy" to bear reproach, to incur loss, and even to lay down our lives for the pure faith of the Gospel. May your tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, even that hope which maketh not ashamed.

Finally, may God preserve and keep you. May your sufferings be for the furtherance of the Gospel here, and add to your crown of glory hereafter.

I am, my christian friends,

In the firm faith and hope of the Gospel,

LONDON,
August 4, 1791.

Your affectionate Pastor,

J. PRIESTLEY.

N^o XXIII.

*From the Young People belonging to the Congregation of
the New Meeting to Dr. Priestley.*

Honoured Sir,

THE common principles of humanity would, after what has recently occurred, incite us to communicate our feelings to you. But we feel urged to it by far greater motives. We have seen the great apostle of civil and religious liberty driven from among us. We have seen the precious labours of a great part of his life destroyed

stroyed by a lawless mob. We have seen his apparatus and library share the same fate. We have seen this valuable member of society in the greatest danger of falling a victim to popular fury; and not yet having persecuted him sufficiently, we are frequently hearing the vilest invectives against him, who is so highly deserving of our gratitude for his personal and unwearied efforts to enlighten our minds on the great subject of religion, and whose philosophical labours have been so justly extolled throughout every part of the civilized world. To attempt a description of what we feel on reflecting on these circumstances would be as difficult as it would be painful. To assure you that we feel extremely for you, would be supposing you unacquainted with us. But, Sir, there is one circumstance which much heightens our sorrow, we cannot think of your abilities without respect, we cannot feel the effects of your labours without indulging an ardent wish that we may still continue to experience the happy effects of your instructions. But when we recollect the indignities you have felt, the trials you have had to support, and the irreparable loss you have sustained; our fears are alarmed lest such complicated distress should lead you to seek an asylum, which, Sir, to our inexpressible sorrow, Birmingham hath not afforded you. On the other hand, knowing the christian dispositions you possess, and the knowledge you have of the human mind, we are convinced that many palliatives will suggest themselves, which, to a mind like your's, will have considerable influence.

Young as we are, we cannot but hope, and expect, that the flame which ignorance and bigotry have kindled, will be soon extinguished by an increase of knowledge, and that genuine christianity will so far take possession of the hearts of our fellow townsmen, that they will look upon the persecution you have suffered at their hands, as a sin against the purest of the gospel precepts. Many, very many, we trust, agree with ourselves in wishing your return. Indulge us then, kind Sir, in this fond hope. Should it, however,

be delayed, may we shew our mistaken neighbours, that, although Priestley is gone, he sowed good seed before his departure, that it fell into good ground, and that it now flourishes in the blade and promises a plenteous harvest. May we prove it to them, that argument armed with fire and faggot may produce a temporary shock, but that finally strengthens our cause, that it forces us to feel the great justness of it, and produces actions natural to such a conviction; we trust we shall always follow your great example in candour and moderation, not losing sight of that christian fortitude you have so uniformly displayed since we have had the happiness of your residence among us. Accept, dear Sir, our warmest expressions of gratitude for the great and lasting services you have rendered us as christians, as members of civil society, and as citizens; and be assured it is with the greatest respect we subscribe ourselves,

Honoured Sir,

Your affectionate Pupils.

Signed with One Hundred and Twenty-one Names.

N^o XXIV.

THE ANSWER.

My Young Friends,

I COULD not read your very affectionate Address to me without tears of joy. You were ever the most pleasing part of my charge, and this Address is a proof that the affection I had for you, and the pains that I took in instructing you, have not been thrown away. Your example will encourage other christian ministers who hear of it, to follow mine. The great object of my Lectures, in all your Classes, was to give you a just knowledge of the principles of religion, as the only solid foundation

tion of proper sentiments and good conduct, and I shall want no consolation under my unmerited sufferings, while you continue to feel, and to act, as you do.

The unsettled state of the congregation, and the consequent discontinuance of our Lectures, you will consider as a trial of the principles you have already acquired. Give a proof of their strength by a steady attention to every means of improvement that is yet in your power. The enemies of our christian liberty have destroyed an excellent Library provided for your use; but your zeal and liberality will supply you with resources of the same kind; and let the more opulent among you assist those who are less so. Re-peruse the works which I composed for your use, and such others as can be re-purchased of those which the enemy has deprived you of. Shew them, that by destroying books, they cannot destroy the effects of reading them; that the love of truth, of virtue, and of liberty, which you have imbibed, can never be eradicated, and that lawless power can never subdue fixed principles.

What I more particularly wish, in your present situation, is, that those who are the best instructed among you would supply my place, in undertaking the instruction of others; and many of you, I am well satisfied, are sufficiently qualified for it; and assure yourselves of the Divine blessing on the weakest well-meant endeavours.

Young as you are, I trust you are too well established in christian principles, to have your faith in a wise superintending Providence at all shaken by the calamitous events which have been permitted to befall us. Christianity did not lose, but gain ground by persecution. It is a state excellently adapted to recal to our minds, and to strengthen our regards to, our future and better prospects, while it loosens a dangerous attachment to the things of time and sense.

The ways of God are unsearchable by us. But be assured, that nothing can materially harm you, if you be followers of that which is good. If I be restored to you,
which

which is my most ardent wish, our mutual satisfaction will be doubled by this interruption; and if not, it will add to the ardour of your wishes, as it does to mine, to meet you where the violence of the adversary can never separate us any more.

I am, my young Friends,

In the faith and hope of the Gospel,

Your affectionate Pastor,

LONDON,

J. PRIESTLEY.

August 12, 1791.

N^o XXV.

From the Members of the New Meeting Congregation.

Dear and Rev. Sir,

THE affectionate terms in which you accept our letter of condolance, and the assurance you give us that it afforded you consolation and joy, have caused us a lively satisfaction. Your desire to concur with us in our endeavours to re-establish the affairs of the congregation, has awakened our anxiety for the season when we may urge your return to Birmingham; and although that period has been thus long protracted, yet we think it our duty to remind you, that we exercise a chearful reliance upon your kind declaration, that you only wait our summons.

The sincere affection we bear you, and the conviction we possess of the value and importance of your life to the cause of truth, and the world at large, will not permit us to consent that you shall be exposed to any unnecessary hazard on your return hither before the time of tranquility and safety. Prevented by these motives, and these alone, from requesting in the most affectionate terms, that you would resume in person your pastoral charge, we assure ourselves

ourselves that the interval they occasion, will not be permitted to operate, in any sense, to our disadvantage.

Our endeavours to procure a suitable place to assemble in for public worship, until our own is rebuilt, though not altogether so-successful as we could wish, will not be discontinued till the object is fully attained: in the mean time, we have the pleasure of assembling in Carr's Lane each Lord's day, with our brethren and fellow-sufferers of the Old Meeting congregation; and we learn with unspeakable satisfaction, that the junior part of our society, profiting by your advice and correspondence, are already assembled in regular classes, and are conforming to your wishes, in endeavouring to continue the important business of religious instruction among themselves, agreeable to the plan you established; so that your labours are still flourishing among us, even in our present state of dispersion and persecution; and we hope and trust it will not now be long, ere your own judgment, and that of your friends, will concur in affording us a renewal of those personal exertions by which we have heretofore been so much edified, and from the continuance of which, we promise ourselves so much future advantage.

We rejoice in the continuance of your health, and in the frequent accounts we receive of your uninterrupted cheerfulness, and offer our fervent prayers to the Almighty, that your eminent abilities may long be spared, and your health and cheerfulness be prolonged with them. With sentiments of the sincerest respect, we remain with unalterable attachment,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your much obliged,

And very affectionate friends and servants.

Birmingham, Sept. 5, 1791.

N^o XXVI.*From the Young People belonging to the Congregation
of the New Meeting.*

Dear and respected Sir,

PERMIT us to indulge our feelings in again addressing you. When assurances of gratitude and attachment are not necessary, there is a gratification in expressing the prevailing sentiments of the heart; and when you, Sir, are the object, we feel no common ardour. We have too much confidence in your goodness, and have had too many proofs of your affectionate regard to our happiness, to imagine you will think us troublesome.

We have received your affectionate and animating letter. Our tears spoke our feelings. We cannot express them,—language is feeble and inadequate. But we will bind your instructions to our hearts. While we remember whose pupils we have been, we cannot act unworthily. We can never sufficiently express our sense of the obligation you have conferred upon us, but we dwell upon the subject with too much pleasure to omit any opportunity of renewing it. To you, Sir, we are indebted for the desire of improvement. You have given us habits of employing our leisure hours in the cultivation of our understandings, in pursuits that afford delight and advantage, and which are calculated to raise us higher in the scale of being. The love of virtue you have implanted in us by precept and example. We will guard and cherish it; and while we enjoy the fruits of it, our souls exulting shall bless you. You have deprived adversity of its sting, and have enabled us to extend our views with satisfaction beyond the world, by impressing our minds with the strongest evidence of the great truths of christianity. These advantages, Sir, we have received from you. We feel their importance, and will diffuse them as far as our influence extends.

extends. It shall be our grand object to endeavour to follow your example in a firm adherence to what we believe to be the cause of truth; in preserving our minds open to conviction, and in the cultivation of fortitude, patience, and charity. We have indeed no slight trial of the latter, when we behold the enlightened and benevolent friend of all mankind, whose life has invariably exhibited, and whose instructions have ever enforced, the practice of every mild and gentle virtue, treated with a cruelty which would disgrace a barbarous age. But we will remember our principles, the principles, Sir, we have imbibed from you, and will say in the language of philosophy and of christianity, Deluded men, we pity you,—May your hearts be turned, and your errors forgiven.

Your sufferings, Sir, have been great, but we have much consolation in knowing that your mind is still greater. The man who can review a life like your's, and say it has been mine, possesses the noblest sources of joy. You have formed to yourself a sanctuary which no storm can reach. The venom'd dart must rebound and wound the breast which aimed it. While the vices of mankind present a melancholy picture to your view, and call forth emotions of sorrow, in a heart benevolent as your's, you will remember how many have been made virtuous and happy by your means, and that no lawless power can destroy the works you have given to the world, or prevent their operation in promoting the best interests of man.

The violence of a mob, or those who chose to act by such instruments, can only give additional lustre to a character known, admired, and revered by the wise and liberal in every part of the civilized world. But eminent talents and distinguished virtue, seldom fail to excite in narrow and interested minds, the dispicable passions of envy and fear; and the ignorance of mankind affords, alas! an ample field for them to work upon. The page of history which the recent event is destined to fill, will exhibit a strong contrast in human nature. Posterity will
pause

pause with astonishment when they find that the same age which witnessed your generous exertions in the cause of truth and of mankind, produced such savage ferocity. Happy would it be for many if the cloud which will hang over their memories were the dark veil of oblivion. But the brightness of your character will render the deformity of theirs conspicuous.

Your proposal that the classes should continue to meet has given us much satisfaction. We shall all rejoice in any occasion of giving or receiving instruction. We hold the advantages we have received too dear to neglect any opportunity of extending and improving them. We have this day met to consider of the best means of carrying it into execution. The different circumstances under which we now assemble cannot fail to impress our minds in a very powerful manner; but we trust they are impressions which will have a favourable influence on our future lives. We have requested Mr. Blythe to supply your place in the senior class till your return, and when he is desirous of it, we shall willingly relieve him from the fatigue of reading. Mr. Hawkes we have requested to give us his presence in the noon class, and to take only so much of the business of it upon him, as is agreeable to himself; since many of us will gladly give him any assistance in our power. They have in the most affectionate manner complied with our wishes, and next Sunday the three classes recommence in their usual form, every thing previous to their meeting being settled.

We have had a very full meeting, and many who were obliged to be absent have requested to put their names to this address as a testimony of their gratitude for your kind letter. But we hope, Sir, the time will soon arrive, when you may again appear among us in the same venerable and endearing character in which we have so often beheld you. To be separated from you is an evil we are ill-disposed to bear. We will hope this trial is not in reserve for us. Should infatuation, however, extend so far, our

N

enemies

enemies shall find that they can never separate you from our hearts; that our gratitude and attachment has a basis too strong for them ever to shake, and that the mind is property which no iniquitous power can reach.

With sentiments of the warmest gratitude and veneration,

We are, Sir,

Your affectionate pupils.

Birmingham,

August 22, 1791.

(Signed with 143 names.)

No XXVII.

From the Members of the New Meeting Congregation.

Dear and reverend Sir,

WE, the Subscribers and Members of the New Meeting Society, being assembled together for the purpose of conferring upon the rumour of an unexpected impediment in the way of your return to us, desire to assure you of the deep and poignant concern these rumours give us. The bare apprehension of your leaving us is deeply affecting to us all. Sudden and violent as was the first onset of the persecution and troubles with which you and ourselves were lately assailed, we saw it necessary that you should retire for a season; and we not only acquiesced in your retirement, but rejoiced in your enjoying that safety at a distance which a deluded populace appeared to deny you here; but the thought of these violences operating to the final dissolution of our happy connexion; as pastor and people, is really more distressing to us than all our other sufferings and calamities, multiplied and severe as they are; and we cannot but sincerely and earnestly deprecate such an event.

Indeed,

Indeed, Sir, we can truly assure you, that there is no plea to be urged, there is no assurance to be given, there is no inducement to be offered, by a people whose hearts are full of veneration, respect, and gratitude, which we cannot, which we do not now urge and offer to you as the genuine dictate of the most ardent, sincere, and fervent affection. We cannot describe how much our feelings are interested; we cannot tell you how earnest, how sincere, and how fervent our desires are for your return, and how much our best affections are moved upon this truly important and interesting occasion: but we know we may safely rely upon your own feelings to do us justice: we know you will feel for us, and also for those who are the dearest to us, when we intreat you to recollect your invaluable usefulness among them, and the happy fruits which have been already seen to result from your exemplary assiduities and labours there. But we will forbear; for although we would be serious and earnest, we would not be importunate. We shall, therefore, urge you no farther.—We know your candour, we trust your goodness, and would rely upon your well known serious and pious mind for the acceptance of this our sincere and well-meant application.—Persuaded you will not deem it an intrusion, we offer no apology. On the contrary, knowing and feeling ourselves that it is the dictate of a pure affection and ardent attachment, we doubt not but you will receive it as such, and that, as it is the genuine result of our zeal and sincerity in the most important of all concerns, it will operate with you accordingly.—Hoping that you may speedily return among us, resume your pen with renewed vigour, and your labours with increasing success, we remain, with the sincerest affection, respect, and attachment,

Reverend and ever dear Sir,

Your friend and fellow Christians.

BIRMINGHAM,

October 22, 1791.

No XXVIII.

*To the Members of the New Meeting Congregation
at Birmingham.*

My Christian Friends,

I NEVER felt myself in a more painful situation than the present, in consequence of sitting down to answer your two most affectionate Addresses, inviting me to return to the exercise of my ministry among you, after having been driven away by lawless violence.

Not only on my leaving Birmingham, but some time after my arrival in London, I had no idea but that of a temporary retreat; thinking that the violence of party spirit, having had its triumph, would be satisfied, and that perhaps, repentance succeeding, I might resume my functions with more advantage than before. But every account that I have received having represented the spirit of party as more inveterate than I had imagined it to be, so that, in all probability, my return would only inflame it, and in consequence of this, my situation, if safe, would be uncomfortable, and perhaps hurtful, it is my deliberate opinion, that it will be better for some other person, less obnoxious to popular prejudice, to take my place, and that I may be more usefully fixed in London, or its neighbourhood.

I hope I need not assure you, that it is with the greatest regret that I at length, after much hesitation, have come to this resolution, in forming which, considerations of a more private nature, but to which no man is, or ought to be, wholly insensible, have likewise had their influence. Never, I believe, was any christian minister more happy in his situation than I have been with you. My sentiments concerning you are not only those of respect and affection, but of pride. It has been my boast, that no congregation that I have been acquainted with, was so candid, so well
informed,

informed, and so ready to adopt whatever their ministers recommended to them for their edification, and that, in consequence of it, your regulations were the best adapted to form intelligent and serious christians. Our example was looked up to by other and distant congregations, who were excited to form themselves upon our model. I had, also, perfect liberty, which few dissenting ministers have, to follow all my favourite pursuits, of every kind, and to preach and write without the least hazard of giving offence, whatever I thought proper. I had therefore, no other wish than to live and die among you.

But as I hope the good that has been done will never be undone, owing especially to the almost unprecedented zeal, and excellent spirit, of the young people among you, whose Addresses will for ever endear them to me, and whose example, wherever it is known, must contribute to instruct and warm others, I have the less regret in now signifying my intention of resigning my pastoral charge, but not till I have seen your affairs in some measure re-established, and some prospect of your being able to do as well without me: and as some time must be fixed, I mention Christmas next.

As soon then, as you shall have provided a place in which I can officiate, I shall with peculiar pleasure resume my functions among you, and continue them, till the time above-mentioned; and if it please God that I should die in your service, I shall not (seeing no apparent cause of apprehension, such as would justify my flight from my proper station) think it will close unseasonably with respect to myself, or the world.

I am,

My friends and fellow christians,

Your affectionate pastor,

J. PRIESTLEY.

LONDON,
Oct. 8, 1791.

No XXIX.

N^o XXIX.

From the Members of the New Meeting Congregation.

Rev. and dear Sir,

Birmingham, O^r. 24, 1791.

YOUR truly interesting letter of the 8th instant has deeply affected us. We are grieved to an excess at the separation it announces, and the apparent necessity of our acquiescing in it; and in "your own" deliberate opinion, that it will be more for the general "good to have some other person fill your place here, "and that you may be more usefully employed in London "or its neighbourhood." It is with the most painful reluctance that we yield to this truly humiliating conclusion, without importuning you with our intreaties, that you would reconsider it, and resume your first purpose of speedily returning to us. But seeing it your deliberate judgment, and knowing the circumstances which surround us; we patiently resign our wills; and urging you no farther, most devoutly pray our heavenly Father, that your prospect of greater usefulness may be realized; that many souls may yet be added to your faithful ministry; that your glorious career of usefulness and benevolence may long be continued, and that your final removal from it to the realm of light may be serene and happy.

You will permit us to add, that the apprehensions which we have been recently informed some of our wisest and best friends entertain for your safety, should you prosecute your intended return to us, necessarily compel us, to make a farther sacrifice of our anxious desires to see you here. We are, indeed, truly sorry to abandon the prospect of your promised return, though it is but for a few weeks; but we should be wanting in affection towards yourself, and in respect to the general good of mankind, were we not to attend to these apprehensions. Indeed, Sir, we speak very sincerely, when we declare that we bear you too sincere and fervent an affection, that we have too great a value for your peace and safety, are far too
anxious

anxious for your preservation from insult, to consent, that you should upon the present occasion expose your person to the hazard of it. Give us leave, then, with hearts full of respect and affection, to intreat you to forego for the present, your purpose of visiting us as our pastor, and let us repeat the assurance conveyed by our first letter, that when the season of perfect tranquility and safety approaches, we shall most cordially hail your return to us, for any period your other important connexions and engagements may admit. In the mean time, anxious to maintain an intercourse with you, and desirous of your aid and concurrence in our choice of a suitable person to assist your worthy coadjutor, the Rev. Mr. Blythe, we request that if you know of any gentleman whom you think suitable for us, and whom you have reason to expect would wish for such an establishment, you will favour us with your nomination of him. We are, with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude, respect, and affection,

Dear and Reverend Sir,

Your truly affectionate Friends and fellow Christians.

No XXX.

*To the Members of the New Meeting Congregation
at Birmingham.*

My Christian Friends,

London, Oct. 28, 1791.

IT adds not a little to my affliction, occasioned by my violent expulsion from a congregation to which I have so much reason to be attached, to be deprived of the satisfaction I promised myself from my proposed visit to you, and doing what might be in my power towards your future settlement. But I am more concerned on account of the reason you assign for it; as it argues a continuance of that malignant persecuting spirit which has been the cause of all our sufferings. What must be the government
of

of a country, nominally christians, in which such outrages against all law and good order cannot be restrained, and in which a man cannot be encouraged by his best friends to come to the discharge of the duties of a peaceable profession, without the apprehension of being insulted, if not murdered.

Do not, however, think that any thing strange or new, has happened to us. The enemies of the primitive christians frequently set loose a licentious populace upon them, when they did not think proper to proceed against them by law; and for this purpose they raised such calumnies against them as made them be considered as the very pests of society. I trust you are so well grounded in the principles of your religion, as not to be discouraged at *this*, or any thing else that has befallen us. Though the enemy has burned our places of public worship, and lighted the fires, as I have been informed, with our bibles, they cannot destroy the great truths contained in them, or deprive us of the benefit of our Saviour's declaration, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

Be assured that, from the interest I take in your welfare, I shall not fail to mention to you any person that I may hear of, who shall appear to me proper to succeed me. Hoping that you will soon be provided with such a person, and that in consequence of being built up in our holy faith, we shall have a happy meeting in a better world, for which all the discipline and trials of this life are excellently fitted to form us, I am,

My Friends and fellow Christians,

Your's affectionately,

7 DE61

J. PRIESTLEY.

THE END.